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NEW YORK.

The Abandoned Farm

and

Connie's Mistake

By

Mrs. Mary J. Holmes

Author of "Tempest and Sunshine," "Lena Rivers," etc.

G. W. DILLINGHAM COMPANY

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BY MRS. MARY J. HOLMES
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The Abandoned Farm
Connie's Mistake

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The Abandoned Farm

CHAPTER I

ALEX. MARSH

Breakfast was late at the Marsh's. It was usually late, and this morning it was later than usual. Alex. Marsh, his sister Amy and cousin Ruth had been to the opera the night before, and to Delmonico's after it was over, so that it was one o'clock before they were home and in bed. And it was much later before Alex. was asleep. He did not care for operas, or music of any kind; a good play suited him better, and he had only gone to escort his sister and cousin and their friend, Miss Ross. Opera music had no charm for him, and he was feeling bored and wishing he was at home, and was listlessly looking over the house and counting the familiar faces by way of passing the time, when his attention was attracted to a box opposite the one in which he was sitting. It was occupied by a plain, old-fashioned looking couple, whom he had sometimes seen in the park, driving in a turn-out as plain and old-fashioned as they were,—a covered buggy, with the top thrown back, and a white horse minus a check

rein, and sporting a tail such as nature intended a horse to have, instead of a short stub, telling of cruel pain in the past and inconvenience when flies and gnats are clamoring for horse flesh. The couple seemed out of place in the park, and they seemed quite as much out of place in this box, whose price for an evening Alex. knew.

" I wonder who the old duffers are and if they enjoy this sort of thing," he was thinking, when a young girl came hurrying in and changed the aspect of the " duffers " at once.

It would seem as if she had dropped something and stepped back to find it, for she held towards the woman a light, thin scarf with a smile and a nod, then, winding it around her neck, she sat down and began to look about her with an eagerness and curiosity which made Alex. think she was new to operas and probably to the city.

" Some country cousin, I dare say," he thought, as he watched her, fascinated by her fresh, young face, which one moment he decided was only rather pretty, and the next thought beautiful, with the smiles and dimples and bright brown eyes, which seemed to be taking in everything and to be delighted with it. The ladies in his box were in evening dress, too low in the neck and too high on the arms to suit his ideas. " I'll speak to Amy and have her piece her gown up and down both before she wears it again," he thought, as he looked at her, and then turned a second time to the girl.

Her dress was of some dark stuff, high necked and

long sleeved, with nothing airy or festive about it except the light lace scarf she had knotted around her neck. But there was something about her which attracted him, and he watched her all through the first act, of which he did not hear a word; and saw her evident pleasure in and appreciation of what seemed to him so tiresome. How could she be pleased with that screeching and the talk which no sane people ever talked in real life. Amy and Ruth pretended to be delighted with that sort of thing, but he fancied it was a good deal of pretence, because it was fashionable. And yet this girl evidently liked it, and her face shone and her eyes sparkled, and her dimples came and went, while he looked at her through his glass, bringing her so close to him that he could see how fair she was without powder, such as Amy and his mother kept on their toilet tables. She did not glance at him, but kept her eyes upon the stage, turning but once to the woman beside her, who was nodding in her chair.

"Good, sensible old lady! I'd like to go to sleep myself," he thought, as he saw the laugh on the girl's face, and the hand she laid on the arm of the sleeping woman, who started up, and, bracing herself stiff and straight, gave her attention to the play until the close of the first act, when there came a diversion which nearly startled Alex. from his seat.

"By all the saints, if there isn't Craig Saltus shaking hands with the duffers, and,—yes,—with the girl, too!" he said, under his breath, as a young man entered the opposite box and, after greeting its occu-

pants, sat down by the girl and began talking to her as if he had known her all his life, while she did not seem in the least elated because one of the most fastidious young men in New York was beside her. Money, family, polished manners and an unspotted reputation,—all belonged to Craig Saltus, who had but one drawback. A fall when a child had resulted in a lameness which debarred him from most of the amusements in which young men delight. He could not ride,—he could not row,—he could not dance,—and at evening entertainments, which he rarely attended, he was obliged either to stand, which was rather painful, if he stood any length of time, or sit beside some dowager listening to her tiresome talk. And yet, cripple as he was, he could have his choice of almost any girl of his acquaintance; and he knew it, but treated them all alike, with a courteous attention which meant nothing. And here he was with these plain people, staying through the second act and looking more at the girl than at the actors, until Alex., forgetting his own delinquencies in that direction, began to be vexed and wonder why, when a fellow came to the opera, he didn't feel enough interest to pay attention to it, and not be watching an unsophisticated girl to see how she took it.

When the curtain went down a second time, Craig rose and, shaking hands again with the " duffers " and the girl, left them, and a few moments later appeared at the entrance of the box where the Marshes were sitting. Instantly there was a flutter of excitement among the ladies, who had failed to see him in the

opposite box. Amy, who had her own views with regard to him and did not think his lameness a very great drawback when pitted against his millions and position, was delighted to meet him, and asked where he had kept himself that they had seen so little of him recently.

"I have been in the country, where mother and Rose stayed later than usual,—it is so delightful there when the leaves begin to change," he replied, adding: "We only came to town yesterday, and to-morrow morning we are off for Europe on the *Etruria,* which sails so early that we must be on board to-night. How long we shall stay abroad is uncertain. It will depend on mother's health. We go for her. And now I must say good-by, as I have other calls to make."

He turned to go, when Alex. detained him a moment.

"Who were the people you were with just now,—the old couple and the girl?"

Amy and Ruth were both talking to Craig, who answered, hurriedly and very low:

"Why, don't you know Joel Pledger and his wife? I thought everybody knew him. The girl is their grand-niece, come to see the city for a few days;—beautiful, isn't she?—and now I really must go. Good-by again."

He was gone, and Alex. sat down, disappointed and annoyed that he had learned so little. Craig had said Joel Pledger, but Alex. understood him *Old* Pledger, and he repeated to himself "Old Pledger! as if that would tell me who he is, or as if I cared. It's the girl

whose name I want. Why couldn't he have told it instead of saying their grand-niece from the country and that she was beautiful? Of course she is. Anybody can see that. Old Pledger! That's a good name for him; I don't believe though, that the girl is a Pledger. The name don't suit her. I wonder how I can find out who she is, and why need Craig have been in such an awful hurry. Old Pledger! That don't sound as if he thought a great deal of him. Well, he's only her great-uncle."

By this time the opera was beginning to have some interest for Alex. The prima donna was excelling herself, and the house was ringing with applause, the girl clapping with the rest, and actually making Old Pledger move his cane up and down a little briskly, while the old lady only showed occasional signs of nodding and was promptly pulled up by the girl. For the remainder of the evening Alex. paid pretty good attention to the play, turning his eyes occasionally to the girl, whose interest never flagged, and whose cheeks were like roses and whose eyes were shining with excitement when the performance was over. Alex. had a glimpse of Old Pledger's stooping shoulders and Mrs. Pledger's three-years-old bonnet and big-sleeved sacque, and the girl with her wrap on her arm, and then he went out into the crowd, which jostled and surged and pushed him until he found himself close to the Pledgers, and saw the girl in her golf cape, with the high collar drawn up around her ears, for the wintry night was cold. His ladies wore soft, fur-lined opera cloaks, and he did not suppose

they owned a golf cape, or would wear one on such an occasion if they did. Well, it didn't matter what they wore. A golf cape looked well on the slim, straight figure, which was finally lost in the throng.

"Going home in a street car or on the elevated. I'd give a good deal to know where they live. I'll find out if I can," he thought, as he followed his party to their carriage and was driven to Delmonico's.

Here he met several acquaintances, and in the talk and excitement he forgot Old Pledger and the girl until he was home and in bed, when they came back to him with a persistency which kept him wakeful as he wondered who the deuce the Pledgers were and how he could find out.

CHAPTER II

ALEX.'S LETTERS

After waiting an hour for her young people, Mrs. Marsh sat down to breakfast alone, and was finishing her coffee when Alex. came in. He had thought of the Pledgers while dressing, and laughed at himself for being so interested in a strange girl. "I don't quite understand it, although it is like me to be attracted by every new face if it is at all out of the common," he thought, "and she was rather uncommon in that expensive box with Old Pledger and his wife, who looked like a muff, and the girl so fair, and without the flumadiddles Amy and Ruth and the rest of 'em wear to such places. And then she had a striking face, though I might not know it again if I saw it."

He was dressed by this time, and, going to the dining-room, kissed his mother, and, seating himself at the table, looked at the letters lying by his plate. There were two,—one a bill from his tailor, which gave him no concern, as he had money enough to pay it.

"Ball is in a hurry for his cash. I must see to it to-day," he said, and took up the second letter, which bore in a corner the address of Sanders & Brown, Attorneys, Denver. "I don't know Sanders & Brown,

nor any one else in Denver," he said, breaking the seal and beginning to read:

"DENVER, *December* 18, 18—.

"MR. ALEXANDER MARSH—DEAR SIR: It is our duty to inform you that your great-uncle, Amos Marsh, for many years our client, died suddenly at his ranch two weeks ago."

Here Alex. stopped reading and said: "Great-uncle, Amos Marsh! I didn't know I had one. Have I or had I a great-uncle Amos?"

He was speaking to his mother, who had torn off the envelope of a Denver paper received with Alex.'s letter, and was intent upon a marked column, which read as follows:

"It is with keen regret that we record the death of our old and highly esteemed citizen, Amos Marsh, who was found dead in his bedroom at his ranch, where he was spending a few days. Heart failure was the cause of his death."

The article then went on to enumerate the many virtues of the deceased, who was noted for his kindness to every one and his charities to the poor, and his great activity for one of his age. A few of his peculiarities were mentioned, and among them his living alone when in town, with no other company than a dog and a cat, and no one to care for him but a Chinaman. His reticence with his friends and his habit of talking to himself were spoken of, and the notice closed with a second eulogy upon him as a good and upright man, who would be greatly missed.

Mrs. Marsh read the article through before she replied to her son.

"Yes, you did have an uncle Amos, but he is dead.

There is quite a long obituary of him in this paper."

She held it toward Alex. But he did not take it. He had run his eyes rapidly over the rest of the letter, which made him hold his breath with surprise. After announcing the death of their client, the lawyer, Mr. Brown, went on to say that for a long time they had urged Mr. Marsh to make his will, but he always refused, giving as a reason that if he made it he must explain some things he would rather not explain to the world. He would leave the explanation in writing to the proper person. That Alex. was the person intended was proven by the fact that when Mr. Marsh was found dead in his bedroom there was on the table before him a partially written page of foolscap, addressed to Alex., which Mr. Brown enclosed in the letter. It had slipped to the floor, but Alex. did not notice it, and read on:

"He told us that his nearest of kin lived in New York, naming you and your sister, and that his property would go to you as the children of his nephew, Henry Marsh, and he always talked as if he expected you to have a farm, or, at least, live on it for a while. He did not leave a large fortune,—he spent so freely for the good of others. There are several thousand dollars in banks and railroad stocks, the interest of which he never cared to use. He was saving it for a particular purpose, he said. He owned quite a valuable ranch, the income from which supported him as his wants were very few. He had a house in town, and an abandoned farm in New Hampshire, among the White Mountains, where he lived a long time, but which he left years ago and came to Denver. For a while it was rented, but so many repairs were demanded and he had so much trouble with his tenants, that he decided to close the house and let the farm run. He went East two years ago, visited the old place, and when he came back he seemed brighter and happier than we had ever seen him, and

talked more about you having the farm, or, at least, living there for a time.

" 'I've made it right,' he said, 'and Alex. will see to it,' though what he meant we do not know. He was always a little obscure in his talk. Queer, or luny, people called him, but he was a good man. Please write us with regard to your wishes, or come to Denver, if possible, and look into the matter."

Alex. read the letter through twice to himself and once aloud to his mother and to Amy and Ruth. The young ladies had come into the breakfast room languid and tired, until Alex. began to read the letter, when they became alive and interested at once, Amy looking over her brother's shoulder as he read, and making sundry comments.

"A ranch in Colorado and an abandoned farm in New Hampshire! How delightful and romantic, and we the heirs! It is like a romance. What is this paper on the floor? Isn't it the one they found on his table?"

She picked up the half sheet of foolscap and handed it to Alex., who unfolded it reverently, as if he felt the touch of the fingers, which must have stiffened in death in the act of writing. There was no date, and the writing was cramped and quite illegible and not very plain in its meaning. But Alex. deciphered it and read aloud:

"NEPHEW ALEXANDER: That was your grandfather's name, and a good one. They say you are honest, with fewer tricks than most young men in the city. I inquired two years ago. I was there and saw your house, but it wasn't for me to go in. I've kept track of my family, what there is left; nobody now but you and your sister. When your father was a boy he came to the farm in New Hampshire and staid a week, but he found me poor

company and never came again. If he had and was older, I was going to ——; but no matter, I've fixed it, and leave it for you to do right for me. Something tells me you will. I am too old to face it, God knows, and he has forgiven me. I am an old man. The doctors say I am not long for this world. I am ninety now, and sitting here alone with no soul in the house; things come back plainer,—folks I knew years ago, and one is standing by the door and looking at me as if he was not satisfied the way I've fixed it, and wants me to put it down again, but I can't to-night, my head is so queer. My candle is nearly out, and I can't see. To-morrow I'll try and write again and tell you why you must go to the farm and do right."

Here there was evidently an effort to write a word with a pen which had no ink in it, and then the hand must have grown powerless and dropped, clasping the side of the table as they found it, and the old man was dead. Alex.'s voice shook as he read this letter, while even the loquacious Amy was silent, wondering what it all meant.

"There's something on the other side of the sheet, —some words," she said at last, and turning the paper over, Alex. saw, written very plainly, the name "Crosby," and after it another name he could not make out, except that the first was "Joel."

"Can you tell me what that last name is?" he asked his sister.

She could not, and Ruth next tried her skill.

"The first letter is certainly 'P,' though a very queer one," she said. "Can it be 'Pleasure'?"

"'Pleasure'? No. There's a 'g,' or a 'y' in it. Try again," Alex. said, and Ruth tried again with better success.

"It must be 'Pledges,' she suggested.

" ' Pledges,' " Alex. repeated, and taking the paper from Ruth, he made " Pledgers " distinctly from the irregular letters. " ' Pledgers,' that's funny," he said, with a thought of Old Pledger and the girl.

Neither Amy nor Ruth saw anything funny in the names. They were too much absorbed in what the old man had written, and asked Mrs. Marsh what she knew of him. She knew very little, except that he once lived on a farm among the New Hampshire hills, and her husband, when a boy, had spent a week with him, but was glad to get away.

" Since your father died I have scarcely given the man a thought," she added. " I did hear, in a round-about way, that he had gone West; I fancied him dead long ago. He was said to be very eccentric,—half crazy, or something."

She was not one to care much for people not in her sphere, and Amos Marsh evidently was not, or had not been while living. Now, however, he became an object of importance. He had left her children his money, and although they were not in need of it, as the Marsh fortune was a large one, she was glad for the addition, and, with Amy, began to wonder how much there was in the banks and how much the ranch and house in Denver were worth. She scarcely thought of the farm, which was uppermost in Alex.'s mind, as he sat looking at the papers in his hand.

" Heard I was honest, with fewer tricks than most city young men! I am much obliged to his informant. Who was it, I wonder?" he thought, then, as his eyes fell upon the last words his uncle had written,

he said aloud: "It looks as if he had done some wrong which I am to right; but how can I, when I don't know what it is?"

"Probably nothing but a whim," Ruth said. "Evidently he *was* half crazy as people thought. Think of his fancying some one standing in the door as he wrote and seeing things at the farm! It makes one feel creepy. Maybe the old house is haunted."

"Oh, how delightful!" Amy cried. "I hope it is. A family ghost adds so much *éclat* to one."

Alex. did not reply. He was thinking of the two names, Crosby and Joel Pledger. Where did they live, if still alive? Possibly in New York, as his uncle was there so recently. "I'll look in the directory," he thought. "Joel Pledger is not a common name, and if I find it I'll follow it up and see if he ever heard of Amos Marsh. Jolly, what if it should be Old Pledger in the box? I've had queer feelings about him ever since I saw him and about the girl."

An hour later Alex. was poring over a city directory, going through the list of Crosbys and Pledgers and marvelling to find so many, especially Pledgers. He had only expected to find a few, but it seemed to him there was a legion. There were Toms and Johns and Henrys and Elis, and at last Joel,—the only one so far as he could see in the list,—and he lived far down town in a most unfashionable part of the city, where Alex. had not been in years. But he was going there now, and, telling his mother not to wait lunch if he happened to be late, he left the house and, walking to Sixth Avenue, took a down-town car in pursuit of Joel Pledger and the girl!

CHAPTER III

ALEX. AND THE PLEDGERS

He had no difficulty in finding the place, and was rather surprised that the street was so clean and well kept. He had an idea that the side streets down town must be untidy, with a second-class air about them. This street was decidedly clean, with a kind of old-time look, as if old-fashioned but highly respectable people lived there,—not people like his mother and Amy and Ruth, but nice people such as the Pledgers and the girl who was visiting them from the country. He guessed there might be boarding-houses there, for occasionally he caught a whiff from a basement of something cooking, which confirmed him in his belief. In the centre of the block was the number he was looking for, and to make sure he was right he ran up the steps and read upon a brass plate, "Joel Pledger." The house was three-storied, with a brick front and an air of great respectability, although very different from the tall, brown stone building far up the avenue where Alex. lived.

"This is the place, and I don't believe it is a boarding-house either," he said; "but what reason have I to think this Joel Pledger ever knew Uncle Amos? None whatever, and I don't know why I came here." Then he thought of the girl, and knew that in some

way she was connected with his interest in the Pledgers. "I'm a fool, but I'll follow it up now I have commenced," he said, as he retraced his steps towards his own home, which he reached just in time for lunch.

The day was fine and warm for winter, and after lunch he proposed a drive in the park, but there was an afternoon tea on hand for the ladies, and he decided to go alone and drive himself in his light buggy behind his thoroughbred bay, with high check and bobtail. The sun was so bright and the air so balmy that it seemed to him everybody was out, and he met many of his acquaintances in their elegant turn-outs, and was thinking what a gay scene it was, when suddenly, at a bend in the road, he came upon Whitey, and behind him Old Pledger and the girl, her eyes shining and her face fresh and bright with the cool air blowing upon it.

"By George, this is luck!" Alex. thought, involuntarily pulling the reins of his horse as if to stop her.

Then, remembering himself, he kept on until he reached a convenient place to turn round, and letting the bay mare have her head, he soon overtook Whitey, jogging on always at the same pace and caring as little for the high steppers around him as did his master. To keep behind the slow vehicle was not an easy matter, for the bay fretted and tossed her head, and would have whisked her tail if she had one to whisk. But Alex. kept her well in hand and followed on, wondering if the "old duffer" would never leave

the park. He did leave it at last, and Alex. left it, too, and drove down Fifth Avenue and into Sixth, and still on into a cross street, where Whitey stopped before the respectable looking house with a brick front, a brass plate and "Joel Pledger" upon it. Alex. had been sure he would stop there, and was glad, for the bay mare was getting restless and pulling hard at the bit, and the moment she felt the reins loosened she dashed on over the rough pavement with a clatter, scarcely allowing Alex. time to turn his head and make sure that the girl was going up the steps. He knew now where she was stopping and where Joel Pledger lived, but was it the Joel his uncle Amos knew?

"I'll find out to-morrow, and if it isn't, maybe I'll see the girl," he thought; and the next morning about eleven o'clock he was ringing the bell at No. 28, noticing, while he stood waiting, how clean everything was around the door and the narrow windows on the sides. "It takes 'em a long time to get here. They must have a mighty lazy maid," he thought, giving a second pull at the old-fashioned bell.

He was taking out his card for the servant girl, when the door opened and he was confronted by Mrs. Pledger herself, a tall and portly woman of sixty-five, her lips shut tightly together and a look as if she scented a peddler or an agent, both her abominations. But Alex.'s face and manner disarmed her. He was neither an agent nor a peddler, and her lips relaxed a little of their tightness, and in response to his interrogatory, "Mrs. Pledger?" she replied:

"Yes, I am Mrs. Pledger; walk in and take a chair."

He walked in and took a chair in what he was sure was the best room, and at which he looked curiously, contrasting it with the grand rooms at home, where one article of furniture must have cost nearly as much as every article here would sell for. And yet there was an air of comfort about it, with its cushioned easy-chairs, its wide sofa, its footstools and rugs, made by hand he was sure, and the centre-table, with some books and a vase, with a few roses filling the room with perfume. Somebody liked flowers. Probably the girl and not Mrs. Pledger, whose personal appearance did not bear much relation to hot-house roses, and who was habited in a dark calico with a wide apron, suggestive of the kitchen, from which she had come in answer to Alex.'s summons. She was the most indulgent of mistresses, and her maid of all work went and came about as she pleased. On this particular occasion she had gone to see her cousin off by steamer, and Mrs. Pledger, in the basement, was preparing their twelve o'clock dinner when Alex.'s ring called her upstairs.

"Did you want to see me or Joel?" she asked, as Alex. sat wondering what he was to say and why he was there.

It seemed such a flimsy reason, but he must say something, and he began:

"You will do as well as your husband, and I really think I ought to apologize for intruding upon you, an entire stranger, who may not be the one I want at all."

"Suppose you tell me what you do want, and not beat around the bush. We can get at it better," Mrs. Pledger said, her lips beginning to tighten.

Alex. braced up at once and began:

"I want to know if you ever knew my great-uncle Amos Marsh? I've had a letter from him, and he's dead."

"Dead! How you talk! Amos Marsh dead! That beats me! When did he die, and what ailed him?" Mrs. Pledger exclaimed.

She knew him then, and Alex. hastened to explain, saying nothing at first of the property, but speaking of the letter to himself, in which Mr. Joel Pledger was mentioned.

"Yes, yes," Mrs. Pledger said, with emotion. "Remembered us, the dear old man. I knew he would. What did he say?"

This was more than Alex. had reckoned on. Uncle Amos had merely written Joel Pledger's name, but the woman expected something more, and Alex. wished awfully to lie and say something complimentary, but he didn't. He said hurriedly:

"He wrote such a nice letter that it made me wish to find you and a Mr. Crosby. Do you know him, and do you know anything about the farm where Uncle Amos used to live? I believe it belongs to me and my sister now that he is dead."

"I rather think I do know something about it. I don't know who would if I don't. I was there a great deal when I was a little girl. Eli Crosby was my half brother, twenty years old when I was born.

I am sixty-five; he'd be eighty-five if living. We are a long-lived race," was Mrs. Pledger's reply.

She was warming to the subject, and Alex. tried to follow her as she told rapidly that Amos Marsh, who lived near the farm, spent half his time there,—he and Mr. Crosby were such fast friends and both such good men,—not an enemy in the world. Then she told how surprised people were when her brother sold his farm to Mr. Marsh, who went there at once to live, and how shocked was the whole community when, not long after the sale, Mr. Crosby was killed on the railroad.

"Mr. Marsh lived on alone," she said, "and naturally he grew a little queer,—used to talk to himself, and the neighbors said he was off. He talked a good deal to my brother, Mr. Crosby, when nobody was near him, and they say he did this till he died. At last he rented the place and went to Denver, and we saw no more of him till two years ago, when he spent a few days in New York and stopped with us. He was straight enough then in his mind, but kept talking about the time he lived on the farm. He asked about your family, of which he'd kept track, but we couldn't tell him much, being we are in different spheres,—you in the smart set and we just plain folks, living in the house we bought when we was married. We was quite up town then compared to what we be now, but I've never cared to change. I like it here; folks know me, and I know folks. There is Miss Walker next door, has lived here just as long as we have, and Miss Brown the other side. Joel was first

in a bank, then he was *the* bank, then he got into Wall Street, was lucky always, till we are forehanded enough and could live up town in a brown stone if we wanted to. But, land sake, I'm happier here. Everybody knows us, or leastwise Joel. He frequently lends money on good security, you know."

"Yes," Alex. interposed, not caring to hear more of her family history, and anxious to ask an important question. "Yes, but about Uncle Amos, who lived on the farm. Wasn't he a good man?"

"One of the best the Lord ever made. No one ever said a word against him," was the hearty response, which lifted a load from Alex.'s mind.

There was no wrong of any account he was to right. It was all a fancy of a morbid old man, who, from living alone, had dwelt upon and magnified some trivial circumstance, making a mountain of a mole hill. If he ever found a wrong he should right it, of course, but he should not hunt for or advertise it, and he was glad, for he hated trouble and didn't know how to right wrongs, and he now began to think of the *girl,* and wonder how he could manage to see her.

Suddenly from the basement below there came a faint odor of something burning, and stepping to the door, Mrs. Pledger called:

"Sherry, Sherry, won't you go down to the kitchen and shove back the chicken stew? It is bilin' over."

"Yes, auntie," came in a clear, young voice, and Alex. heard the swish of a gown on the stairs and through the hall down to the basement.

He did not sit where he could see the girl, but he

arose as if to go, and, stepping near the door, waited for her to come back. But she didn't come back, and as Mrs. Pledger, too, arose, as if expecting him to go, he left the house, forgetting to inquire for any Crosbys who might be living and would be her relatives and friends of Amos Marsh.

"Well, no matter," he thought. "They have nothing to do with it. I've found that Uncle Amos was a good man, who never could have done anything really wrong, and I've learned that her name is 'Sherry.' Pretty, but odd for a girl. I wish I could have seen her."

If Alex. had looked back in time he might have seen a girl's face close against the window of the dining-room, where Sherry was trying to get a glimpse of him, while Mrs. Pledger was saying: "A very nice mannered young man, but I don't see why under the sun and moon he was so anxious to know if we ever knew Amos Marsh, and if he was a good man. Good indeed! The Lord never made a better!"

CHAPTER IV

THE ABANDONED FARM

THERE are many of them scattered through New England, some on hillsides, some in valleys, some on public highways and some among the mountains, where rocks and ferns seem the only products of the soil. There are houses with slanting roofs, big chimneys, high window stools and small panes of glass; houses whose owners lived their quiet, monotonous lives, with no thought of change for themselves. They were content to till their barren fields, with only an occasional thought of the far West and the capabilities it held for them if they were younger and could get there. Their sons did get there when the fathers and mothers were laid away to rest, and the old homesteads and farms were left for other and distant fields. A few of the houses are in a fair state of preservation, but they look desolate and dreary, with no sign of life around or in them, except the rats or the squirrels, which, finding ingress through some broken window, make themselves a nest in the garret, where they hold high carnival through the winter until the warm sunshine of spring calls them back to their woodland home. After a lapse of time the strongest built house begins to show signs of decay, and nowhere was this more apparent than in the house to which Alex. came

on a February day, a few weeks after his receipt of Amos Marsh's letter. He had been to Denver and consulted with the lawyers, had visited the ranch and the house where his uncle had lived when in town, and had appropriated the Scotch collie, who had been his uncle's companion since he was a puppy. He was a fine specimen of canines, with his intelligent face, his long wool and shaggy mane, and Alex., who was fond of dogs, fancied him at once. "Laddie" was his name, but Alex. rechristened him "Sherry," greatly to the disgust of Chinaman Lee, who had been Mr. Marsh's servant, and who said, "Sherry bad name; he not come for Sherry; he no like wine."

Alex. laughed and patted the big fellow, who took kindly to him, and if he did not answer at once to Sherry, he soon learned the whistle with which his new master called him. Alex. would like to have taken the cat, but as that was impracticable he left it for Lee, with many injunctions that it should be well cared for, and with his dog started for home, turning aside from the main route to see the farm, about which he had a great deal of curiosity. At the station, which was a mile from the house, he took the only available conveyance, a box sleigh, drawn by a spavined horse and driven by a loquacious man, who informed him that his name was Bowles—"a carpenter by trade in the summer and a jack-at-all-trades in the winter, when folks didn't have much tinkerin' of houses to do."

"Know the Marsh place? You bet," he said, slapping the reins on Spavin's back with an injunction to

"ca-dap." "I used to tinker there by odd spells before the old gent went away, and he left me to look after things,—kind of an agent. Nice man? Wall, I guess he was 'bout as good as they make 'em; never heard a breath against him. Little queer sometimes, and talked to himself a good deal; but, land sakes, there was nobody else to talk to half the time, he lived alone so much. It beats all how curis some folks is about an old house,—real old like this one which must have heard the thunder of the Revolution, if it had thundered this way. The grandees who come to the mountains in the summer drive up here, rafts of 'em, and, oh, my suz, what a time the women make over the old place, and how they want to buy things if they was for sale. Why, I could have sold an old chest in the garret a dozen times. It's full of clothes, women's clothes, and when I told 'em that they was crazy to see 'em. But I said no;—they wasn't mine to sell, nor to show. I've been a faithful steward, I have. And you are goin' to take the place? Well, I'm glad to have somebody see to it besides me. It's a sin the way things has gone on sence he quit rentin' it square. Old mother Chase and her brood squatted on it one winter. I let 'em in, to be sure, at a nominal rent, but, land sakes, I never got a cent, and they split up the back room floor for wood and half the suller stairs, and then decamped in the night. Farmer Jones kept his cows there in the summer, and somebody else their horses,—in the pasture, I mean,—and I can't collect a cent. 'Twas the finest farm in these parts once, and might be again with a little care. Going to farm it yourself?"

Bowles glanced sidewise at the young man beside him, wrapped in a fur-lined coat, and thought how unlike he looked to a farmer.

"I don't know," Alex. said. "Is the house greatly out of repair?"

"Well, I'd laugh," was the reply, as Bowles slapped Spavin's back again and told him to "cadap!" "Out of repair? What can you expect of a house standin' empty for years? It wants shinglin' all over; leaks like a sieve; suller wall cavin' in in two or three places; jice rotted here and another there; cistern gone; conductor pipes bust; eaves rotted; two chimneys down, tother ready to tumble; door-jams settled; winder lights smashed, and some frames tetotally gone; roof sagged in, the middle pillars on piazza ready to fall, and floors givin' away, and——"

"Oh, please stop," Alex. exclaimed. "You horrify me. It will take thousands to bring it up."

"No, sir-ee," Bowles replied, beginning to see a chance for himself. "Lumber is cheap here, and labor, too. I'm a carpenter, I told you, and I'll take the job reasonable. You'll have to have it shingled, though, and a suller wall built and a cistern and jice and jams and winders."

He was going on with the list of needs again, when Alex. stopped him a second time by asking, "Is that the place?" as they came in sight of a great square house, standing on a rise of ground a little back from the road.

"Yes, yes, that's it! Here we be," Bowles said,

reining up before the gate, or rather where the gate used to be.

It lay on the ground now, covered with snow, as was everything as far as the eye could reach, and Alex. involuntarily thought of the lines he had learned when a boy,

> " On Linden, when the sun was low,
> All bloodless lay the untrodden snow."

The snow around him was certainly bloodless and lay white and glistening in the wintry sunshine, glints of which were falling on Mount Washington in the distance and on the hills and tree tops nearer by.

" It's a beautiful view and must be lovely here in summer," Alex. thought, as he went up the walk and the ricketty steps on to the piazza, where a board gave way under him and he came near falling.

" Take care, or you will break your neck. I come nigh breakin' my laig on one of them rotten boards," Bowles said, putting out a hand to steady the young man.

There was neither lock nor bolt to the door, and they soon stood in the long, wide hall, with a fireplace in a corner, a door at the farther end opening on to another piazza and stairs which led straight to the upper hall, where there was a scampering of little feet as of many animals running over the floor.

" Rats or squirrels," Bowles said. " The house is full of 'em."

It was a chilly, grewsome kind of place, and Alex. shivered as he went through room after room,—twelve

downstairs and as many more upstairs, besides the attic. They visited that last, and saw where the rats had been and where the squirrels lived, and Alex. sat down near a big chest pushed into a corner and looked about him. Scattered through the garret, which was very large, were piles of old furniture, which would delight relic hunters, and he did not wonder that guests from the hotels had tried to buy them.

"There used to be some pillers here and blankets and things loose," Bowles said; "but, my land, old mother Chase took 'em. Wonder she didn't bust open that chist. Guess 'twas too strong for her. That is the one I told you some of the quality wanted to buy."

Alex. glanced at it now, and saw that it was one of those old-fashioned cedar chests in which housewives of years ago kept their linen and parts of their wardrobe.

"It's full of things," Bowles went on; "women's clothes, all flowered like and silky. He aired 'em when he was here and took as much pains with 'em as if the woman who used to wear 'em was alive,—Mr. Marsh, I mean."

"Oh, yes,—my uncle. He came here, did he?" Alex. asked, and Bowles replied:

"Yes, and stopped two days with me, but stayed over here most of the day time and wrote letters or something in that chamber where there is a chair and table. That was his sleeping-room when he lived here, and he looked sorry when he went through it, and said, 'The vandals haven't left me much.' Wall, there wasn't much to leave after the auction. You

see, he had a vandue before he left and sold a good deal. What he didn't sell was put up here, and some has been stole, but there are piles left. This chist is too heavy to carry off, and I've kept a sharp look out, too, bein' here every week. He was in here a good deal airin' things, and when I ast him whose flowered gown that was on the line, he said, 'Miss Crosby's, who used to live here.'"

"Crosby," Alex. repeated; "that's the man who first owned the farm?"

"Yes, before I was born, I guess," Bowles said, "and he and his wife are buried acrost the road. There's a big monument to their memory,—put up by Mr. Marsh. Mabby you didn't notice it as we drove up," and then thinking he heard some one below he started down, followed by Alex., glad to escape from the cold garret, which affected him unpleasantly.

The place was certainly frightfully run down. "But it had great capables, and might be made a first-class summer house," Bowles said, as they drove back to the station. Some such idea was in Alex.'s mind, and kept growing until, by the time he reached home, it was a fixed fact that he would try the "capables." He was very fond of the country, and would like to live there half his time, and he meant to bring up the farm to what it used to be, and make over and modernize and add to the house, if necessary, until it could accommodate twenty or more people. He would call it "Maplehurst," because of the maples which skirted the road leading to it, and he would fill it with his friends and his mother's and Amy's and Ruth's for

one summer, at least, and see how it worked. Some should be invited for a week, some for two, some for four and some for the entire season. In short, it was to be a grand house party, such as the English had, only it was to last longer. It would cost a great deal, of course, but he guessed he could stand it for once, and he was planning drives and picnics and excursions to Mount Washington when his train stopped at the Central Station, and he hurried home, full of his scheme, of which his mother and Amy did not at first approve. Their preference was for Saratoga and Newport and similar places, rather than a house in the country miles from anywhere. But his enthusiasm conquered their scruples, and they began at last to look forward with a good deal of interest to the summer they were to spend at Maplehurst when Alex.'s plans were perfected.

CHAPTER V

SHERRY

It was the last of May, and more than a year since the cold February day when Alex. went up the mountain road to the tumbledown house, which was now a fine mansion,—the pride of its owner and the wonder of the people in the neighborhood, who were waiting developments. All through the previous summer and autumn the work of repairs and additions had gone on, with Bowles as head carpenter and Alex. there half the time giving directions and hurrying on the work. The roofs and chimneys and cellar walls and cisterns and windows had all been attended to. The piazza had been extended on three sides of the house and a bowling alley and billiard-room added. The barn and stables had been enlarged to accommodate the horses Alex. meant to have, with carriages and tally-ho for the use of his guests. Two grooms had been hired, with a chef and housekeeper and maids for the kitchen, and a head waiter. Invitations had been given to and accepted by people anxious to try this new departure, which promised so much.

"And now there's nothing but the table waiters," Alex. said. "I must advertise for these, and I want four to begin with, nice, pretty girls,—salesladies, I suppose, and stenographers and typewriters, and, possibly, teachers, who will be glad of a change."

"And put on airs, and think they must sit with us when their work is done, and perhaps practise on the piano. I've heard of such things," Amy said, with a toss of her head.

She was prouder than her brother, and did not believe in waitresses who might put on airs and sit with the family. She wanted girls who would keep their places. Alex. laughed, and said he'd advertise any way, and see what came of it. Two days later there appeared in the leading papers an advertisement to the effect that four or five capable young girls were wanted as table waiters during the summer at Maplehurst, among the White Mountains; the work would be light and the highest wages given. Those wishing for the place were to apply to the housekeeper, Mrs. Groves, No. — West Twenty-fourth Street, and, if accepted, were to report at Maplehurst the last week in June.

The morning after the advertisement was inserted a New York paper found its way to Buford, a little inland town in Massachusetts, where there was a very aristocratic look in the one long, broad street, and an air of sleepiness everywhere. There didn't seem, however, to be anything drowsy about the young girl who had been for the daily mail, finding only the morning paper, which she read as she walked along the elm-skirted street towards home.

"Oh, mother and Katy, just listen to this!" she cried, sitting down in the doorway and reading the advertisement. "I mean to apply. I am told many young ladies do this very thing just for the

excitement and a little money. It will be such a lark, and it's where our great-grandfather Crosby used to live. You know Aunt Pledger wrote us that a Mr. Marsh was fitting it up for a big house party and calling it Maplehurst. I've always wanted to see the swell world without being seen,—have wanted to know how they demean themselves towards each other every day, and how they treat their employees, and here's my chance. The highest of wages, too, though I don't care so much for that as for the fun. Yes, I mean to apply."

She was very much excited, but her ardor was slightly dampened by her more practical sister Kate, who exclaimed:

"Fanny Sheridan Sherman! Are you crazy? Applying for a place as waitress in a hotel, or boarding-house, or whatever it is! Have you no pride, and what do you think Aunt Pledger would say, and how would she like her New York friends to know her niece was a waiter?"

"Aunt Pledger!" and Fanny, or Sherry, as she was usually called, laughed a low, rippling laugh as she leaned against the door-jamb and fanned herself with the paper. "I have never been able to make you understand that Aunt Pledger isn't a swell woman, if she does live in New York. Her house is away down town on a side street, and her furniture the same she had when she was married years and years ago. She keeps one girl, Huldah, and she is gone half the time, leaving Aunt Pledger to open the door herself and do lots of things. I know she has

plenty of money, but is close, and she don't care what we do to get a living, if it is respectable and we don't come upon her. When father died last summer and she came to the funeral, didn't she ask us both what we intended to do, or what we could do, and when I told her I couldn't do a blessed thing, unless it was housework, didn't she say, 'Better that than do nothing and expect to be cared for by others. Young people succeed better who rely on themselves.' I believe she was afraid we might ask her for help. Little we would get. I know she had me in New York two weeks, and took me everywhere, and she was very kind to me. But that was the first attention she ever showed us, and I don't believe she would have done that if it hadn't been for Miss Saltus, whom she met on some charitable work, and who spoke of us and said, 'The next time either of your nieces are in New York let me know; I'd like to call upon them.' After that Aunt Pledger invited me and did the handsome thing, for she never does a thing by halves, and then Mr. Saltus came to us in the opera-box and was glad to see me, and that helped. She is an awful good woman, of course,—goes to church twice every Sunday, rain or shine, and half supports a society for the prevention of cruelty to children and animals; but she believes in letting people take care of themselves, if they can. Her pride will not be hurt because I hire out as a waitress. I don't know enough to teach as you do, but I can wash dishes and wait upon table, and earn some money and not let you be the only bread-winner. Then I shall enjoy immensely being

Mr. What's-his-name's waitress, and know I am somebody else just as good as he is. He is the man who came to Aunt Pledger's when I was there, and asked if she ever knew old Mr. Marsh. I nearly broke the window trying to see him as he left the house."

"Young?" Kate asked, and Sherry replied:

"Yes, and good looking, judging from the back of his head and the fit of his coat. Uncle Pledger knows about him as he does about all the smart set, although he's not in it. He is just an old-time New Yorker, who has lived in the city fifty years and seen the rise and fall of everybody, and knows everybody by reputation. He might live uptown in one of those handsome brown stones, but, like Aunt Pledger, prefers to stay where he is, leaving the city to roll on as it pleases."

Here Sherry laughed as she recalled her own and Katy's ideas of Aunt Pledger's house and style before her visit there the previous year. Born in Buford and the daughter of a clergyman, she knew little of the world except what she had seen at boarding-school, where, with Katy, she had spent a year. Of fashionable society she knew nothing, except as it was partially represented by the Saltus family, who owned a large house just outside the village, where they spent their summers. Between the Saltuses and Shermans a strong friendship had sprung up, and Sherry was right in her surmise that it was to Rose Saltus she owed her invitation to visit her aunt. With Kate she had talked a great deal of her New York relative,—had wondered why they were never asked to visit her

and why she never visited them, or paid them any attention except to send herself and Kate and their mother each a handkerchief and their father a book at Christmas. For the rest of the year she ignored them entirely.

"Another handkerchief? Yes, and here's the mark she forgot to take off: twenty cents! I have six of them now, all the same size, quality and price,—half cotton," was Sherry's contemptuous comment when the last batch of handkerchiefs arrived with the twenty-cent mark upon them.

Sherry was the outspoken one of the family, to whom the most latitude was allowed by her rather stern father while he was living. He had wanted a boy, whom he was to call Sheridan, after his favorite general. But she proved to be a girl, and was christened Fanny Sheridan, and grew up a bright, light-hearted, impulsive girl, fond of excitement and adventure, making friends wherever she went and feeling herself everybody's equal. To see New York had been the dream of her life, and when Mrs. Pledger's invitation came she was delighted, for now she should see life as it ebbed and flowed in a great city. She had heard that her Uncle Pledger was a millionaire, and had expected a grandeur which would quite overshadow her own home. Of just what she thought of the reality she never said much until the morning when she received Alex.'s advertisement, and Katy suggested that Aunt Pledger would feel hurt to have her grand-niece a waitress. Mr. and Mrs. Pledger had been very kind to her, and gone far out of their

way to entertain her. They had never been to an opera in their lives until they took her there; and when the questions of seats came up they hired an expensive box, Mr. Pledger saying he'd do the whole thing or nothing, and he guessed he could afford to have a spree now and then. He had his spree and slept through half of it, but was glad Sherry enjoyed it, and was proud that Craig Saltus came into the box to call, and hoped those high bucks, the Marshes, saw him. If he was not in the smart set he knew everybody who was, and from having lived in New York so long both himself and wife were as good as encyclopedias with regard to the history of many of the people, and it was his boast that he had at some time loaned money to more than half of his more intimate acquaintances to tide them over some difficulty. He was proud of himself as a money lender,—proud that he could afford to wear plain clothes, live far down town and drive old Whitey. Sherry, however, did not seem quite in keeping with the old horse and buggy. Something in her face made him think of the grand turnouts and the ladies who graced them; and when the drive in the park was suggested, he thought to have a handsome carriage and "show her off with the best of 'em." But his more frugal wife suggested that this would be quite an expense after the opera box, and though Sherry might grace any carriage he could hire, he would be out of place in his old gray coat and hat. So the carriage was given up and the drive taken behind Whitey. Sherry enjoyed it immensely, and saw Alex. Marsh, who Uncle Pledger told her "was

a swell man, but about as good as they made 'em," and knew that he drove behind them on their way home, and called afterwards to inquire about his Uncle Amos, who owned the farm where her great-grandfather once lived, but she thought no more about him.

Since that time her father had died, leaving his family, as clergymen's families frequently are left, with little to depend upon besides their own exertions. They owned the house they lived in; there had been a life insurance, and Kate was teaching in a graded school. Sherry, who was the cleverest of housekeepers, and saved her delicate mother in every possible way, was doing nothing, and had puzzled her brain until it ached over the problem as to what she could do. She wanted to see the world and to earn some money at the same time, and here was her chance. The waitress part did not disturb her at all. She would still be Fanny Sheridan Sherman, although she did not intend to make any capital out of that or expect any favors. She would go like the rest of the girls and be one of them. She was rather self-willed when her mind was made up, and overcoming her mother's and sister's scruples, she wrote to Mrs. Groves in New York, asking for a situation as waitress at Maplehurst.

"I hope you told her about Aunt Pledger, and that you were a clergyman's daughter and a lady," Katy said, and Sherry replied:

"Indeed I didn't! I just asked for the place and signed myself 'Fanny S. Sherman.' I'm going to be

Fanny up there and leave Sherry behind with the rest of me."

In a few days Mrs. Groves' answer came, very stiffly worded, to the effect that Mrs. Groves would see her on a certain day at a certain hour, and would expect references as to character and ability.

"I told you so," Katy said. "References from the last lady you worked for."

"Which is mamma. I can manage that," Sherry answered, not at all disheartened by Mrs. Groves' requirements, and with the understanding that she should spend the night with Mrs. Pledger, she left home on the morning of the day appointed by Mrs. Groves for the interview.

CHAPTER VI

THE INTERVIEW

Sherry did feel a little shaky as she went up the steps to No. — West Twenty-fourth Street and touched the bell. The *lark* did not look quite so funny as it had at first. But with her usual strong will, she put aside any regret she might have felt. It was too late to go back; there was nothing to do but go forward. Her ring was answered, and she was soon face to face with Mrs. Groves, a woman of fifty-five or sixty, who had forgotten her youth, if she ever had any, and thought of nothing except to maintain her position with dignity and discharge her duties conscientiously. She felt it an honor to be chosen as the matron at Maplehurst by the Marshes, and did not shrink at all from the responsibility of choosing the waitresses. She had already dismissed a dozen or more as wholly unfitted for the place, and her forehead was puckered in a frown when Sherry's card was handed to her.

"Fanny Sheridan Sherman," she read. "A pretentious name. I remember her writing to me. Show her in."

This last to the bell boy, who pushed aside the portière and Sherry entered and bowed to the lady rust-

ling in black satin, with a bit of Duchess lace at her throat and gold-rimmed eye-glasses on her nose. There was no servility in Sherry's manner or appearance of timidity. She was always self-possessed, and never more so than now, when answering Mrs. Groves' questions.

"What is your name? Oh, yes, I know,—Fanny Sheridan Sherman. Fanny will be sufficient, if I take you. Superfluities like Miss, as some girls like, will not be permitted."

Sherry bowed and said she was twenty years old, that her home was in Buford, Massachusetts, that she had never been in service and had no references.

"No references!" Mrs. Groves repeated, rather severely, and Sherry replied: "None except what mother might give you. I have never worked out, but have done a good deal at home."

"What can you do?"

"All that is required of a waitress, I think," Sherry said. "You can try me, and if I do not suit you can dismiss me."

"Are you willing to wear a cap?" was Mrs. Groves' next question.

Two or three applicants for the place had refused caps and been promptly dismissed by Mrs. Groves, who looked curiously at Sherry, waiting for her answer.

"Why, yes, I'll wear a cap if you wish it and think I'll do my work any better."

"It isn't that," Mrs. Groves said. "It is not a

matter of work. It is a badge,—a sign,—a distinction——"

"Yes, I know," Sherry replied. "I know what the cap means. I'll wear it," and she laughed inwardly as she saw herself in a cap waiting upon a table and imagined Katy's indignation when she heard of it.

Something of the laugh showed in her eyes, and Mrs. Groves saw it and was puzzled. This was no ordinary girl seeking a situation, and she might make trouble with that high head and that look in her eyes which she could not fathom. But she must begin to make a choice. Alex. had said to her, "Get nice-looking girls, not low-down truck. You know I want everything first-class." Sherry certainly was first-class and nice looking and not "low-down truck," and Mrs. Groves decided to take her on trial. "It is settled then, and you will be at Maplehurst the last week in June, where I shall meet you and the other girls and break you in," she said, after a little further questioning, which elicited nothing from Sherry with regard to Mrs. Pledger, or her father having been a clergyman and her family one of the best in Buford, three points upon which Katy had laid great stress.

She was equal to herself and going to run herself, and when she said good-morning to Mrs. Groves she left that lady in a very perplexed state of mind as to whether she had done well to engage a girl with Sherry's face and manner, and who had never been in any kind of service.

"I can dismiss her if I do not like her," she

thought, and as she was the first she had accepted, she wrote her down in her book, "Fanny Sherman, Buford, Massachusetts, No. 1. Seems capable but airy, with her head too high. There is something behind, but trust me to manage her!"

Mrs. Pledger was not expecting Sherry, but she was thinking about her as she sat darning Joel's socks in her basement kitchen and watching the soup simmering on the range. As usual, Huldah was out; she generally was in the afternoon, and evening both, for that matter. Mrs. Pledger's humanitarian principles carrying her so far as to think a poor girl who worked in the basement all the morning should have a good share of the rest of the day for fresh air and recreation.

"Now, for the land's sake, who can that be, and Huldah gone!" she said, as Sherry's ring echoed through the house. "Miss Ellett, I do believe, and she's come for my subscription to the Humane Society. She always catches me in my everyday clothes. I'll whip off my big apron anyway."

She took off her apron, and hurrying up the stairs opened the door to Sherry.

"For goodness' sake," she exclaimed, "where did you drop from? Think of angels,—you know the rest, and I was thinking of you. Come in and take off your things. Have you come shopping?" she continued, with a feeling of disquiet as she thought that if Sherry went shopping she must go with her and see that she did not spend her money foolishly.

"Shopping!" Sherry repeated. "No, indeed! I've nothing to shop with, but I'm going to have as much as forty dollars. Think of it!" and very rapidly she told of her plan and asked what her aunt thought of it.

"And so you are going out to work?" Mrs. Pledger said, and her under jaw dropped a little, as if she did not quite know whether she liked it or not.

She had been much pleased with Sherry during the two weeks she had been her guest, and had often thought of inviting her again for a longer visit and including Kate in the invitation. But the habits of years are not easily broken, and she shrank from anything which would change her quiet ways as two young girls would do.

"Too much trouble, and costly, too," she said to herself, thinking of the expense when Sherry was with them the previous year.

They had done the handsome thing then, and it must suffice for a while at least. And still Mrs. Pledger often found herself thinking of the girl who had filled the house with so much brightness, and was making up her mind to take her to some cheap watering place when Sherry appeared and made the startling announcement that she was going as a waitress for the summer to Maplehurst!

"You don't mean it!" she said, and Sherry replied, "I do, most certainly. I want to do something; and lots of nice girls go as waitresses to these places, and it don't hurt them any. Nothing hurts that is respectable, and I shall still be Fanny Sher-

man, and I want to see the world away from Buford."

In her admiration of the girl Mrs. Pledger came near offering to take her to some fashionable watering place where she could see the world far better than at Maplehurst, but the expense came up as a hindrance. Perhaps it was just as well to let her try her wings a little, and the Marshes were sure to recognize in her a superiority over the other girls and treat her accordingly, she thought, and suppressed her first impulse and began to speak of Maplehurst as it was when she was there as a girl.

"A grand old house, with big rooms and wide halls and fine views," she said. Sherry's great-grandmother, Mrs. Crosby, was a beautiful lady, with lovely clothes. "Her wedding dress was a cream brocade," she continued, "with roses scattered over it, and would almost stand alone, and there was some rich lace with it and some jewels, and she looked like a queen at a reception your uncle gave. All the élite of the different hotels were there, with an ex-governor, and we lighted a hundred wax candles, and the affair was long talked of as the great Crosby party. Your grandmother died the next winter, and Uncle Crosby had her gowns and laces and jewels put away in a big cedar chest, where she kept her best linen. I was there once for a day after I was married. Mr. Marsh owned the place then. He had bought it of your grandfather Crosby, who soon after was killed in a railway accident. They are both buried in a little enclosure on the hillside opposite the house,—Mr. and Mrs. Crosby, I mean,—and Mr. Marsh erected a

monument to their memory. You'll see it, and the chest, if it hasn't been taken away. It is more than thirty years since I was there. The place has been rented since and abandoned, and there's no telling what is there and what isn't. The gowns and things belong to you and Kate. Mr. Marsh told me I could have them, but as I was Mr. Crosby's niece, not Mrs. Crosby's, they didn't belong to me, I said; if Cousin Henry,—that was your father,—ever married, they should go to his wife and children if he had any, I said. 'All right,' he answered, but most likely forgot it, he was so absent-minded and queer. Did your mother ever get anything?"

"Never that I know of. I think, though, I have heard that father received something when studying for the ministry. Mr. Marsh sent it, perhaps," was Sherry's reply, and Mrs. Pledger went on:

"That would be like him. People wondered what became of the money he paid Mr. Crosby for the farm. Probably your grandfather spent it or gave it away. He was very free handed, and there was barely enough to pay funeral expenses and outstanding debts. If you find the chest, ask Mr. Marsh to open it. The key used to hang on a big tack driven in the back of the chest. It may be there now, though it's a miracle if it is. The things belong to you and Katy. Tell Mr. Marsh I said so. He has heard of your uncle if he hasn't of me. Everybody knows Joel by reputation and he knows everybody. The Marshes are first class people,—not fast,—at least the young man isn't. He is a friend of Craig Saltus, you know."

Mrs. Pledger had talked very rapidly, while Sherry listened with absorbing interest, more glad than ever that she was going to what was once her great grandfather's home, and in which she felt she had some rights, especially in the cedar chest, if it was still in existence. She doubted, though, if she should speak of her relationship to Mr. Crosby or the Pledgers.

"I am going just like the other girls, a common waitress, to see how it seems," she said to her mother and Kate when, on her return from New York, she repeated the particulars of her interview with Mrs. Pledger and Mrs. Groves, the latter of whom she did not quite like. "She acted as if there was an immeasurable distance between us, and said that at Maplehurst I would be known as No. 1 among the waitresses, because she had accepted me first, and I am to wear caps. She laid great stress on that."

"The snob! I hope you told her you'd never wear that badge of servitude," Kate said, with a stamp of her foot.

Caps were not common in Buford. Even the Saltus servants did not wear them, and Kate was hot with indignation. But Sherry only laughed, saying she would as soon wear a cap as not, but when Kate asked suddenly, "Did you tell her that you sometimes walked in your sleep?" she was startled, and replied: "Why should I, when I haven't walked for years, and why did you put it into my mind to think about it? Perhaps I shall now get up some night and frighten them to death."

"I hope you will. That would be jolly. Caps and

snobs!" Kate said, but Sherry's face was clouded by this reminder of a disagreeable habit of her childhood, which she believed she had outgrown, but which might come back if she allowed her thoughts to dwell upon it.

Her will and nerves, however, were strong, and in the weeks which passed before she was due at Maplehurst she had so much to think about that the sleep-walking was nearly forgotten, or remembered only as something which had been, but would never be again.

CHAPTER VII

MAPLEHURST

It was the first day of July, and Maplehurst was in a state of great excitement, for sixteen people were coming by the afternoon train, and among them Alex., his mother and sister and cousin. Mrs. Groves, with her staff, had been there a week or more, and had carefully drilled her subordinates with regard to their duties, especially the waitresses. There were four of them, all from Boston, except Sherry,—one a sales-lady, one a stenographer and one from a restaurant, who felt that she knew quite as much as Mrs. Groves, if not more, because she had been in a restaurant three or four years. But that dignitary soon set her right by telling her that waiting upon every sort of people in a restaurant or hotel was very different from waiting upon such guests as were coming to Maplehurst. Sherry had listened very respectfully to the directions, but there was a look upon her face which said that she, too, had an opinion as well as Polly, the girl No. 4. She had dined once or twice in great state at the Saltuses' in Buford, and she remembered what she had seen and knew that in some respects it differed from Mrs. Groves' rules, and when they were told that in no event were they to take in or out more than one dish at a time, she ventured to say, "Excuse me,

Mrs. Groves, but that will take so long and necessitate a great many steps, as the kitchen is so far from the dining-room, and there is the anteroom between, and are there not different ways of serving?"

The look on Mrs. Groves' face would have disconcerted one less self-contained than Sherry, whose expression did not change at all at the lady's reply: "There can be but one right way. I have told you what that is, and as for *steps,* you are hired to take them if you walk miles in doing it."

Sherry bent her head with what she meant to be a civil bow, but Mrs. Groves fancied she saw in it signs of insubordination, and resolved to hold a tight rein on No. 1, who evidently was above her business, and who looked too much like a lady, and was quite too pretty in her black dress and white apron with ruffled shoulder straps and the cap set so jauntily upon her curly hair. On her arrival at Maplehurst Mrs. Groves had found a box of caps sent by Amy Marsh, who had selected them, and for which Alex. had paid. He was shopping with his sister, who had asked his opinion with regard to different styles.

"Great guns! I don't know about styles of caps. Must they wear them?" he said.

"Our maids do," Amy answered. "Why shouldn't these?"

"Oh, ah, well—er—I suppose they must if you and mother say so. But I fancy these are different,—picked, you know," Alex. said; "salesgirls and schoolma'ams and that sort of thing, you know. Mrs. Groves writes that one is an awful high stepper. She may not take to caps. Some don't."

"She will take what we choose," Amy replied, and her brother answered: "Well, then, get the most becoming and least objectionable. They are all young girls of twenty or thereabouts, and I won't have them looking like grandmothers. How will this do?" and by chance Alex. selected the smallest and daintiest and prettiest of them all, as well as the most expensive.

But expense was nothing to him. He was always wanting a good time for himself and others, and meant to have it at Maplehurst. "A jam up good time for the whole of us, hired help and all," he said to himself, using a bit of slang which horrified Amy, but which she forgave because he was her big, unselfish, good-natured brother, giving the good time to others, if there was but one to be had. His mother had hired Mrs. Groves, and he had left the selection of his staff entirely to her, feeling no particular interest in any except the four waitresses—his quartette he called them. He was somewhat particular about these, as he would see them three times a day. He wanted them near the same age and size and good-looking. "Not so good as to detract from the young ladies, but good," he said to Mrs. Groves, who felt that she had filled the bill well, possibly a little too well with No. 1, who certainly was handsome, and whose manner would always be that of a lady whatever she was doing, and who would be noticed wherever she was. The quartette had come to Maplehurst on the same train and had been received by Mrs. Groves, who had assigned them their rooms, one to

each, greatly to Sherry's satisfaction. She did not mean to be proud or exclusive, but she wanted a room to herself, where she could sometimes be alone. For the rest she meant to be one with her companions,—Susie, the saleslady, Annie, the stenographer, and Polly, the restaurant waitress; Nos. 2, 3 and 4, as Mrs. Groves designated them. They were bright, good girls, glad for this outing and inclined to be very friendly with Sherry, whom they at once recognized as a little different from themselves and treated her accordingly.

Sherry had been nearly a week at Maplehurst, and had been drilled daily and made to wait upon Mrs. Groves as she was expected to wait upon the coming guests. She proved the most apt of all the girls, and for this reason was assigned to the Marsh table.

"You will have Mr. and Mrs. Marsh, and Miss Marsh, and their cousin, Miss Doane, who lives with them, and two or three more, the Saltus family later on, perhaps, and you must be very particular as the Saltuses live in even greater style than the Marshes," Mrs. Groves had said, and at the mention of the Saltuses the hot blood had flamed into Sherry's face and then for a moment left it very white as she wondered what they would say to find her there,—a machine, as Mrs. Groves had said she must be, never smiling, and never seeming to see or hear what was being done and giving no sign that she had ever seen them before unless they made some advances.

"Never mind. I am in it and shall go through it," she thought with the first real twinge of regret she had felt for the *lark* in which she was engaged.

She had been all over the house, from the basement to the attic, where she had found the chest standing just where it had stood for years. It had a great fascination for her, seeming to link her with the past of years and years ago, when her great-grandmother had come there a bride and brought it with her. Seating herself on a stool near it Sherry sat for a long time wondering what was in it, and looking through the window off upon the lovely panorama of sunshine and cloud, of steep wooded hills and the green valley, and in the distance Mount Washington, blue and hazy in the summer light. Across the road on a knoll was the little cemetery, the mass of evergreens bringing out in sharp contrast the whiteness of the marble shaft Mr. Marsh had erected to the memory of his friends, Mr. and Mrs. Crosby. The yard had a neglected look, and the fence around it was broken in some places, but that afternoon she saw men there at work and heard that Mr. Alex. had ordered a new fence to be built and the undergrowth of bush and bramble to be removed.

The next day she went to the two graves, sunken so low as to be even with the ground. The lettering on the stone was somewhat blurred by the storms which had swept along the mountain road, but she managed to read, "Frances, beloved wife of Peter Crosby, who died in her bloom, being only twenty-five years and six months old, October 10th, 18—."

"Her name was Frances, which is the same as Fanny," she said. "I must have been named for her," and she began to feel a great deal of interest in

the woman who had slept on the hillside so many years. "There ought to be something planted around the graves," she thought, as she looked at the bare spot.

It would be easy to transplant some of the many rose bushes in the Maplehurst premises, and she could do it or ask to have it done, if it did not necessitate her telling why she was interested in the graves. She did not intend to tell anything about herself. Polly, No. 4, had quizzed her a good deal.

"I know you are somebody else besides a waiter like me. You are made of different stuff. Come, now, ain't you?" she had said, but Sherry did not enlighten her. She was simply Fanny, or No. 1, and Mrs. Groves was calling her, saying it was time for the drill. "Dress parade," No. 4 called it, saying that she had been put through her paces until she didn't know her left hand from her right, and whether she was to pass things over the heads of the guests or in front of them. She was full of life and fun, and made faces at Mrs. Groves' back, and mimicked her voice and manner perfectly.

"'Now, young women,'" she would say, or young *persons,* I suppose we are, 'remember and pass to the left; take from the right. Never speak unless spoken to. A sociable waitress is bad form. Step softly and slow. Bring in and take out one thing at a time. Don't stare, or seem to see anybody. Mr. Alex. is very particular to have his guests served properly.' Mr. Alex.! I am anxious to see him. I suppose he is a great swell, but not greater than I have waited on

in Boston, and who didn't feel too big to say, 'How are you, Polly? Mind and bring my soup hot, or tea or coffee, and get me some cream.' I know a thing or two about a table as well as old mother Groves with her silk gown and gold glasses. Why, she was once waiter in a second-class restaurant in New York. I know it from a woman who was with her. Now she is matron of Maplehurst and feels big, but I don't care for her. I shall say 'good-morning' if anybody says it to me," and Polly executed a part of the skirt dance to finish her speech.

Naturally Nos. 1, 2 and 3 laughed at her performance, and shared her opinion of Mrs. Groves and her desire to see Alex., who had been held before them as one sure to detect the slightest departure from the deference due him and his guests from his employees. Of the four Sherry cared the least, and yet on the day when he was expected with his party she began to feel a little nervous, and to wonder what he would think of his quartette and of her. They were standing now in a row before Mrs. Groves, who was very imposing in her black satin dress, her old lace, gold-bowed spectacles, and her bunch of keys jingling at her side.

"Now, young women," she said, "I expect you to do your best, and remember it does not matter that you are clerks,"—she would not say salesladies and stenographers and restaurant waiters,—"and—" she paused and glanced at Sherry, not knowing where to place her.

Polly, who admired Sherry greatly and styled her the Duchess, spoke up and said, "A real lady."

Mrs. Groves frowned, and continued: "No matter what you have been, real ladies, or what, you have hired out to do certain duties, and I expect you to do them to the satisfaction of Mr. Marsh, whose orders I am carrying out. If not, you will be dismissed."

"Who will take our places?" Polly asked; and Mrs. Groves replied, "Plenty are ready to jump at the chance. Don't think we are dependent on you."

Polly, who knew the difficulty there was to get help anywhere, shrugged her shoulders in a way which brought a sourer look than usual to Mrs. Groves' naturally sour face.

"Mr. Marsh can command the best of help," she said, "and expects the best of service, and so does his family. Mrs. and Miss Marsh are more particular than he,—that is,—more exacting. Ladies always are of their servants."

Sherry felt for a moment as if she hated Mr. Marsh and his family, but she gave no sign of any emotion, and when, with a wave of her hand, Mrs. Groves signified that the conference was ended, she walked away with her companions and went to her room to wait for the expected arrival.

CHAPTER VIII

THE ARRIVAL

From the stable-yard there came a blast from an Alpine horn as the cortege started for the station. There was a long wagon for baggage, an open brougham, two buggies and the gayly colored tally-ho, for whose appearance, with the two grooms and four big black horses, the people who lived along the road were watching. It was nearly car time, and Sherry soon heard the rumble among the hills and saw the wreaths of smoke curling up in front of the station where the train was stopping. On a balcony opening from the hall in which the rooms of the quartette opened, Nos. 2, 3 and 4 had assembled, and Sherry finally joined them and stood waiting till the four black horses came prancing up the hill, the clinking of their silver-tipped harness, the blowing of the horn by one of the grooms and the chatter and laughter of the young people, nearly drowned by the barking of the huge dog, who ran sometimes in front of the horses, again under them and again at the side of the road, jumping and rolling over and shaking his handsome head and long mane in token of his delight with the freedom and freshness of the country. It was the dog Alex. had brought from Denver, changing his name from Laddie to Sherry, to which the dog had

become so accustomed that he had seemingly forgotten his old name. Occasionally, to test him, Alex. would call "Laddie, Laddie," when the dog would plant his fore feet firmly on the ground and, lifting up his head, seem to be intently listening to something heard long ago and forgotten. But he would never move from the spot where the sound reached him, no matter how many times "Laddie" was repeated. Call him "Sherry," and he always came with a bound, oftentimes putting both paws upon the shoulder of his master.

So many things to interest him had come into Alex.'s life since the night of the opera, when he saw Sherry Sherman in old Pledger's box, that he did not think of her now as much as formerly. Who she was, or where she was, he had no idea, and the only link between her and himself was the dog he had named for her, and who was now barking himself nearly wild in his joy at being free to run as far as he pleased and thrust his nose into every suspicious looking hole along the road, hoping to unearth a woodchuck, or rabbit, or something stronger, it mattered little to him in his exuberance of spirits. As the gay cavalcade swept up the hill, Alex. swung his hat with a cheer for Maplehurst, which was at once taken up by the party, who shouted themselves hoarse as they drew up before the door, where Mrs. Groves was standing to receive them.

"That's him. I didn't s'pose first-class folks made such a row as that, and Mr. Marsh is yelling, too, and he looks real good and not at all as if he would eat us,"

Polly whispered, her attention concentrated upon Alex., as was that of her companions.

What they saw was a fair-haired, fair-faced young man, who, as Polly suggested, looked as if he was real good. All his life he had been having good times and helping others to have them, and he was having one now as he stood up in the tally-ho hurrahing for Maplehurst. Behind the tally-ho was the brougham, with Mrs. Marsh and the elderly ladies, while the open buggies contained husbands and fathers of some of the party. It was a gay gathering of well-bred, fashionable people, who, like Alex., were having a good time, and Mrs. Groves felt the importance and pride of her position, and bowed low as they descended one by one and began to fill the piazza and the hall, and to exclaim with delight at the beauty of everything.

"Oh, this is lovely! This is paradise! I wish I was to stay all summer instead of two weeks. I hope he will invite me," Sherry heard as she came down from the balcony and stood at the far end of a side piazza, with a catch in her breath as she thought that her place was with the merry group rather than as a menial waiting for orders from Mrs. Groves.

Just then she was startled by a loud, peremptory call of "Sherry, Sherry, come here!"

Without dreaming that anything or anybody could be meant but herself, she started swiftly in the direction of the sound, and was met and nearly knocked down by a dog who planted his forefeet on her shoulders and stood shaking his head at her with a bit of

stick in his mouth. While the rest of the party had been going into ecstasies over the house and the view the dog had been making observations, too, and spying a hole under a rock across the road had at once started for the spot and commenced digging, eager to do battle with anything which might be hiding there. Fearing for the safety of his pet's long fur, Alex. called quickly, "Sherry, Sherry, come here!"

Obedient to the call the dog came, but picked up as he came a chip, which he hoped some one might throw for him to catch. Seeing Sherry running down the long piazza, he scented fun in that direction and made for her, while Alex. called again, "Sherry, come here," and hurried around the corner in time to keep the girl from falling, the force was so great with which the dog leaped upon her. She was fond of dogs, but this one frightened her, and her face was very white as she looked up at Alex., and her breath came quickly as she said, "Please call him off."

She swayed a little, and Alex. put one arm around her, while with the other he grasped his dog by the mane, and said: "Down, Sherry, down! It is only play. He is very good-natured. I hope he has not frightened you," and he looked anxiously into the face which struck him as one he had seen before.

"Just at first he startled me, he came so swiftly. What did you call him?" Sherry said; and Alex. replied, "Sherry,—odd, I know, but pretty; don't you think so? I am his master, Alex. Marsh, and you are——?"

Sherry hesitated a moment and then answered, with

a laugh, "The girls call me Fanny, and Mrs. Groves, No. 1. I am your waitress."

"By George!" Alex. said, under his breath, and in his surprise letting go of the dog's mane.

Not till that moment had he noticed Sherry's dress, the white apron and cap, which told her position, and which he recognized as one of the lot he had bought in New York.

"By George!" he said again, because he had nothing else to say, while Sherry's beautiful eyes twinkled with a look of half scorn and amusement at his discomfiture. "Fanny! Yes, that's so. I ought to have known. I beg your pardon."

"For mistaking me for a lady?" Sherry said, and now there was scorn and sarcasm both in her voice, which made Alex. wince and feel small, while, for want of something better to do, he wrenched the chip from his dog's mouth and sent it out upon the grass, followed swiftly by the delighted animal.

It seemed scarcely a second before he was back to where Alex. still stood looking curiously at Sherry and stammering he scarcely knew what except that he hoped she liked it at Maplehurst, and was comfortable and not overworked. He wanted everyone to have a good time, and if there was anything he could do for her she must let him know.

Mrs. Groves, who hated dogs, had heard the clatter of Sherry's feet and seen him as he disappeared around the corner. She was very careful to have the piazzas kept clean and had had them scrubbed that morning, and here was that huge creature careering

over them like mad. His place was at the stables with the horses, where a kennel had been built for him, and she started after him, shooing him as if he had been a hen and shaking her satin skirt at him, but stopped suddenly as she caught sight of Mr. Alexander Marsh talking to No. 1, who stood before him with what Polly, if she had seen her, would have called her grandest Duchess manner, and was actually smiling in his face, and showing her fine teeth and dimples. Mrs. Groves had been constantly expecting something out of the common from Sherry; but nothing quite so barefaced as thrusting herself upon Mr. Marsh's notice before he had been there half an hour, and every thread in her satin gown rustled and the keys at her side gave out individual jingles as she said, "Young woman, this is not your place; you are wanted in the house to take towels to the rooms in corridor 2."

Sherry looked at her in surprise, as this was the first intimation she had had that taking towels to the rooms was a part of her duties. Nor was it, and Mrs. Groves had only thought of it as a means of getting rid of her. But Sherry made no protest except with her eyes, which flashed a moment with a look Mrs. Groves had seen before and did not like. Then she said, very respectfully, "Yes, madam," and with a bow to Alex., walked away, followed by the dog, who was so persistent in letting her know what he wanted that when she reached the end of the piazza she took the stick from him and threw it into the yard, as Alex. had done. There were leaps and bounds, and

Mrs. Groves was nearly thrown off her feet as the dog rushed by her to the door through which Sherry had disappeared, shutting it after her. Finding no one there, he looked around with surprise and disappointment, and then came back to Alex. and Mrs. Groves, signalling to the latter that he wished her to continue the play. He might as well have signalled the Sphinx for any response he received, except a frown, as she held her dress away from him.

"He is so glad to be in the country again that he is nearly crazy," Alex. said.

Mrs. Groves bowed and continued the conversation the dog had interrupted. She had commenced by saying: "I knew she had a great deal of assurance, but I did not think she would go so far as that."

"As what?" Alex. asked, and Mrs. Groves replied:

"Thrust herself upon your notice the first thing."

"She did nothing of the sort," Alex. answered quickly. "My dog nearly knocked her down, as he did you, and I apologized for him, and told her who I was and asked who she was. She said she was sometimes 'Fanny' and sometimes 'No. 1.' She is a deuced pretty girl any way. Who is she and where did she come from?"

Mrs. Groves frowned. Alex., with his democratic notions, would spoil the servants if she did not keep a tight rein.

"She is Fanny Sherwood, or Sherman, or something like that," she said. "I don't try to remember their last names. I call the waitresses Nos. 1, 2, 3 and 4, and she is No. 1, because I hired her first."

"Do they like it?" Alex. asked, and Mrs. Groves replied: "I don't consult their wishes. I tell you, Mr. Marsh, you must be strict these days with your help, or they will run over you and expect to be Miss Brown, or Smith, or whatever their names chance to be, especially if they are clerks, or typewriters, or teachers."

"And what is No. 1?" Alex. asked.

"Nothing, so she says," Mrs. Groves answered. "Poor, no doubt, and wanted an easy job and some money. I can't say that she does not do her work well, but there is something about her which tells me that she's a high stepper and must be curbed."

"So she is the high stepper you wrote about? Well, don't draw the bit too tight," Alex. said, laughingly. "I want everybody to have a good time,—help and all. I could not enjoy myself if they were being ground down like machines,—so treat them well, Mrs. Groves,—treat them well, and if No. 1 wants to step high, let her, provided she does not kick over the traces."

"Which she will, if you have your way," Mrs. Groves replied.

"Well, let her kick," was Alex.'s rejoinder.

He was beginning to feel a good deal of interest in No. 1, who, with a dozen fresh towels on her arm, was going towards corridor No. 2.

"What are you doing? The racks are full of towels," a chambermaid said to her.

"Obeying Mrs. Groves' orders," was Sherry's reply, as she went on and knocked at the first door in the corridor.

It chanced to belong to Amy Marsh, who, thinking it one of her friends, called out familiarly, "*Entrez,* if you can get in."

The tone of her voice changed very materially when she saw who it was.

"Oh," she said, "I thought Martha was the maid on this floor."

"She is, but Mrs. Groves sent me," Sherry answered, laying a part of her towels on the already well-filled rack.

"Yes; well, now you are here, I wish you would put up some of my things, which I have scattered everywhere in unpacking my trunk to get my dress for dinner," Amy said.

"When I have disposed of these I will help you," Sherry replied, leaving the room, while Amy looked after her curiously.

The girl's personality was beginning to impress her. "I wonder who she is," she thought. "Not an ordinary, sure; but some saleslady, I dare say, or teacher. They usually carry their chins in the air, and hers is very high. No matter, I mean to make her useful."

Amy's room was littered with the different articles she had dragged from her trunk, and these on her return Sherry began to put away, while Amy questioned her as to her name, and where she had lived, and in what capacity she was at Maplehurst.

Sherry told her she was waitress No. 1, that her name was Fanny, that she came from the country and was neither a saleslady, nor typewriter, nor teacher. Amy did not ask her last name. Like Mrs. Groves,

she did not care. Fanny was enough, and as she seemed willing, notwithstanding the way she held her head and chin, she asked her to button her dress and fasten her collar and see if her skirt hung right. And Sherry did what was required of her and did it so well that Amy said to her, "Seems as if you must be a lady's maid, you are so handy. Are you?"

"No, I have not that honor. I was never any one's maid but my mother's and sister's. I am glad if I pleased you," Sherry answered, and her chin certainly did take an upward tilt, and there were red spots on her cheeks as she left the room and went down to receive Mrs. Groves' last directions before dinner.

Numbers 2, 3 and 4 were already in the anteroom looking a little anxious, except Polly, who said she didn't care a rush for all the gentry at Maplehurst; she had seen a thing or two in Boston, had waited on a Governor, and could teach madam herself. Further remarks were prevented by the appearance of madam, who began: "Now, young women, this is your first dinner, and everything depends upon the way you acquit yourselves. If you are very awkward and make mistakes I may have to fill your places. Mr. Marsh is very particular about his table service. When the gong sounds you are to walk in slowly side by side with your trays, and take your places at your respective tables, behind the chair at the head, and don't on any account ever put your hand on the chair or stand lopsided on one hip. Remember!"

With this injunction she went out, leaving Nos. 1, 2, 3 and 4 waiting for the gong, with Polly taking a few steps of the Highland Fling as she waited.

CHAPTER IX

THE FIRST EVENING AT MAPLEHURST

"Now then," Polly said, when the Fling was finished, "the time for action has come. So, heads up, heels together, toes out, shoulders back, and when the gong sounds, forward march, like soldiers going to battle. There she goes!" and she sobered down as the musical gong echoed through the house, and the four girls, with faces not quite straight, marched into the dining-room and took their places, while on the stairs and in the hall there was a rustle of muslin dresses and ribbons and merry laughter, and then the gay company came in, preceded by the head-waiter, a mulatto, who had arrived that morning and whom Mrs. Groves had not dared take in hand.

He knew his business, and gave her to understand that he did, and with great dignity assigned the party their seats. The Marshes were nearest the door, and Polly, who was on the side with Sherry, gave her a comical smirk and wink as Alex. took the chair behind which Sherry was standing. It was to have been Mrs. Marsh's seat, but as there was a window at her back which would bring her directly in a draught she exchanged with Alex., who started a little when he saw Sherry pulling his chair out for him. Friendliness and familiarity were a part of Alex.'s nature,

and neither his mother nor sister could make him understand the distance there was between him and his inferiors. Pleasant words cost nothing, was his theory, and they came naturally to him for every one he met. Had it been Polly behind his chair he might only have nodded to her, and would have recognized her fitness to be there. But Sherry, with her head and chin so high, her grand Duchess manner, and the look in her face as if she thought it a big joke, was different. He had met her before, and something in her eyes made him say, involuntarily, "Hello," as to an old acquaintance whom he was surprised and pleased to meet again; then, seeing the look of astonishment on Amy's and his mother's face, he said, "I hope you are over your fright."

Sherry inclined her head and passed him the menu for his choice of soup. But her eyes met his with a laugh she could not repress. Her eyes were always betraying her, and they flashed upon Alex. a look which made him feel hot and cold, and wonder again where he had seen her or some one very like her. He might have asked her had they been alone, but the dignity with which his mother straightened herself and the expression on Amy's face subdued him, and he sat quite still, watching Sherry as she took the orders and went down the long dining-room in the direction of the kitchen.

"Alex.," Amy exclaimed, "are you crazy, hallooing the waitress and talking to her as if you knew her?"

"I do know her," Alex. replied. "I may almost say I have had her in my arms."

"What do you mean?" Amy and Ruth and his mother asked in a breath, and Alex. replied: "My dog nearly knocked her down, and I got to the spot in time to save her, and, by George, neither of you have more an air to the purple born than she has. She is not a common personage, and ought to be sitting with us instead of waiting upon us."

"Don't be foolish, nor talk so loud; here she comes," Amy said, as Sherry appeared with Mrs. Marsh's soup and then went back for another dish.

"Well, just look at her and see how she carries herself. All the fellows are watching her, and Charlie Reeves, I know, is dying to be at our table," Alex. said; then, as it was some little time before his soup came to him, he began to wonder at the delay and why the girls all walked as if in a slow drill when he was so hungry, and there was Charlie Reeves eating dry bread he was so famished.

The dinner progressed slowly, as it must if Mrs. Groves' orders were followed, and Alex.'s impatience increased, and but for his mother he would have gone into the kitchen to see "why they were so infernally slow, and why they couldn't bring and carry more than one thing at a time."

"It is hot here as a furnace, and we shan't get through till dark. I'm going to tell her to hurry anyway," he said.

"Tell whom?" Amy asked, and he replied, "Why, Miss—what's her name? You know."

"You mean No. 1," Amy said, and Alex. replied: "No. 1 be hanged! That's no name for a girl. She

has another, of course. What is it? She told me. Fanny? Yes, Fanny! Pretty name, too, and there she comes with one plate of salad, where she might have brought two or three, and by George if there isn't——"

The rest of his sentence was a loud, "Sherry, you wretch! what are you doing here? Go back!"

Every one in the room was startled, and no one as much as Sherry. She had seen the dog looking in at her from the kitchen door, but had no idea he was following her, and Alex.'s sharp outcry, "Sherry, you wretch!" unnerved her completely. She did not think of the dog, or that he was meant. It was herself. She had done something wrong, and every object in the room began to swim before her and the strength in her arms to leave her. There was a crash, and tray and salad were on the floor, with the dog sniffing at them, and Alex. was bending over the débris, his hair once touching Sherry's as he picked up the tray and she the broken plate.

"What is it?" he asked, looking at her white face.

"I was so stupid," she said, "and thought you meant me."

"You!" Alex. exclaimed, in surprise. "Why should you think that? It was the dog. Didn't you know he was following you?"

"No," Sherry answered, and the "no" was like a sob, for she was very near crying.

"Alex., do sit down and let the girl attend to her business," Mrs. Marsh said, a little sharply, and Alex. sat down, while Sherry, more mortified than she had

ever been in her life, took out the broken plate and resumed her duties, while a maid from the kitchen was sent to remove the salad from the floor.

In spite of his master's commands that he should "get out," the dog stretched himself by the window, watching every move of Sherry, and occasionally putting out his big paw to touch her dress as she passed him, and once making a motion to follow her. But Alex. kept him down, and the long dinner came to an end just as the sun was dipping behind the high hills around Maplehurst, and shedding a few farewell rays on Mount Washington. The guests hurried to find a cool place on the piazzas or under the great maple, where there were seats around the trunk and chairs scattered over the rugs spread upon the ground.

"Now we will have a good time smoking and talking, and by-and-by we will have some iced lemonade, and if anyone wants a drive there are plenty of lazy horses in the stables and lazy grooms to harness them; and there are three or four wheels, if you would like a spin along the road. I've had a path scooped pretty smooth for a mile or two."

Alex. was distributing palm leaf fans as he said this, and bidding his guests have a good time. He was a prince of hosts, and it did one good just to see how happy he was, moving among his guests, who certainly had a good time watching the lights and shadows as the sun went down and the moon came up and threw its silvery rays upon the valley and hills and mountains. And while the party was having its good time in the cool of the early night, the

great, kind-hearted Alex. did not forget that there was another party probably not having as good a time at the rear of the house. In his journey to the kitchen, ordering iced lemonade and tea and biscuits, he had heard the clatter of dishes and seen Nos. 1, 2, 3 and 4 hurrying with their work as if they, too, were anxious for the fresh air and the moonlight. Conspicuous among them was Sherry, her face still very pale and with an expression which made Alex. sorry for her. He was apt to be sorry for people not having as good times as he did, and these dish washers certainly were not.

They ought to be out-doors getting some fresh air after such a tramp as they had at the dinner, walking miles, he believed, when half a one would have answered. Fanny wasn't used to it, he knew, and she was so tired that she dropped her tray.

If Alex. had questioned himself closely he would have found that a great share of his concern was for Fanny, whose white face haunted him, and after revolving matters for a few minutes he came to a decision that dinner should not again be dragged out so long. The guests wanted to get through and the waitresses wanted to be through. They were human,—yes, very human,—and Sherry's face came before him the most human of all, as it looked up from the débris on the floor, the lips quivering and tears in the great brown eyes.

" I'll fix it so everybody will have a good time. I'll see that Groves woman. She is the high cockalorum who orders things, and, by George, I hate to tackle

her; there is something in her steel-gray eyes which makes a fellow feel small. I'll see the *chef* first. We are here for a good time and not to spend half of it at the table."

When Alex. reached this decision the fans and tongues were in full sway on the piazzas and under the maple, and the iced lemonade had been brought out and the clatter of dishes had ceased, and he saw one or two white figures flitting towards an old woodbine-covered arbor, which was at a little distance in the rear of the house, and supposed to belong to the help. Nos. 2, 3 and 4 had started for it the moment their work was done, but Sherry lingered behind. She must see Mrs. Groves, who had not yet heard of the accident, as she was not in the kitchen when it happened, and no one had reported it. She had gone to the piazza seldom used by the guests, as it looked towards the stables. Her first dinner had been a great success, and so far as she knew Nos. 1, 2, 3 and 4 had done credit to her training. There had been no confusion or hurry, and it had occupied nearly two hours, as it ought. There had been seven courses, and tomorrow an eighth was to be added. On the whole, she was satisfied. It was better to be matron here than waitress at an eating-house on the Central Railroad, where she once was, and of which she had no very pleasant reminiscences. She was happy and was fanning herself complacently when Sherry appeared, and in a straightforward way told what she had done, but gave no reason for doing it. She dropped the tray and broke the plate and was sorry,—that was all,

and she waited for Mrs. Groves to speak, standing very erect, with her hands locked together and the fingers working a little nervously.

Mrs. Groves was both angry and surprised, and she looked at Sherry as if the offence were so great that she could hardly do it justice.

"Broke a salad plate, and one of the best set!" she began at last, in a voice which made Sherry tremble for what might be coming next. "What possessed you to be so careless? Looking at the guests, no doubt, instead of attending to your business. I ought to discharge you, and will if such a thing occurs again. I shall deduct the price of the plate from your wages. Of course you expect to pay for it?"

"Certainly," Sherry answered, "and for the whole set, too, if you cannot match it."

"Have you any idea how much the whole set cost?" Mrs. Groves asked, and Sherry replied: "A great deal, I suppose. Fifty dollars, perhaps."

"Fifty dollars!" and Mrs. Groves's lips curled in scorn. "The plate was part of a dinner set which cost more than you can earn in several summers. It is not likely you can match it. You can only pay for the plate. I will see Mr. Marsh about it. Hereafter be more careful, and keep your eyes and mind on your business."

Before Sherry could reply Alex. appeared upon the scene. He had interviewed the cook first and told him there were to be no more dinners two hours long, with his guests waiting half that time for dishes to be brought.

"'Tain't my fault, sir," the *chef* said to him. "Everything is ready to your hand, but Mrs. Groves orders us that only one thing shall go in or out at a time and the girls must walk as if they was attendin' their own funerals. Lord, sir, the way she's drilled 'em is enough to kill cattle. You better see her."

"I will," Alex. answered, and, with a slight tremor, he started to find the lady who, the *chef* said, was on the back piazza.

As Alex. reached the corner near which Mrs. Groves was sitting he caught the sound of Sherry's voice, and, stopping, heard what passed between her and Mrs. Groves, his blood boiling as he listened and all his dread of Mrs. Groves disappearing.

"She will do nothing of the sort," he said, coming forward. "Excuse me," he continued, "I was coming to find Mrs. Groves and could not help hearing the conversation. Pay for a broken plate! I hope I am not so small as that."

Mrs. Groves took off her eye-glasses and looked at the young man, while she said: "But, Mr. Marsh, it was one of the most expensive set, not a Haviland, and the servants ought to pay for what they break. They always did in General Walker's family, where I lived three years."

"I don't care a picayune what they do in General Walker's family, or whether the plate was Haviland, or Royal Worcester, or Dresden, or what it cost." Alex. began gathering courage from Sherry's eyes, which fairly danced and seemed to him to show dif-

ferent colors, a trick they had of doing when she was greatly pleased or excited.

She was both now, and the color came back to her face in bright waves as Alex. went on: "I shall have none of my broken ware paid for by my—" he was going to say "servants," as Mrs. Groves had put that word into his mind, but a glance at Sherry stopped him, and he said, "By any young lady in my employ."

Sherry's eyes were like stars as they beamed upon him, while Mrs. Groves gave a kind of gasp, as if either the heat or the "young lady" were too much for her. With a wave of her hand she adjusted her glasses, and taking it for granted that she was dismissed, Sherry left Alex. to have it out with Mrs. Groves. There was an attempt on her part at an argument that the plate should be paid for as a warning to the other girls; otherwise every dish in the house might be broken or nicked before the season was over.

"Let them be nicked and broken. I can get more," Alex. said, rather hotly for him, "and another thing I must speak of, I can't have the dinners so long. Two mortal hours we were at the table to-night, and half that time we were waiting for plates and things to come in and go out one at a time. At this rate the day will be spent at the table."

"What do you mean?" Mrs. Groves asked.

"Why, it is like this," Alex. replied. "If four fresh plates are needed don't bring them one at a time at a snail's pace. It takes forever."

"Do you want a big tray piled with dishes, as at

a hotel or restaurant?" Mrs. Groves asked, and Alex. replied: "Of course not; there is a medium, and I want to save time as well as steps for these girls, who must have been fagged to death. The one who was just here, Fanny, I believe, is her name, was white as a sheet when she dropped her tray. I thought she was going to faint. Evidently she is not used to the work."

There was a call for Alex. from one of the guests, and, with a bow, he walked away, feeling uncomfortable, as he always did when he had made anyone else so; but glad that the interview was over and he had taken the dragon by the horns.

Sherry meantime had gone to the summer-house, where she found Nos. 2 and 3 sitting upon the steps, and Polly, lying upon a seat inside, her feet crossed and her hands clasped under her head.

"Hello, No. 1," she said, as Sherry appeared. "You still live, I see. What did she say? Did she give you the bounce?"

"No, only a promise of it if I offend again," Sherry replied, as she took a seat upon the steps and began to inhale deep breaths of the cool air from the hills and to fan herself with her apron.

"I was never so dead tired in my life," Polly began. "I wonder if any of you can guess how far we walked during the dinner. I have a pedometer my brother gave me, and I thought I'd wear it and know. Guess now."

No. 3 said it seemed ten miles, No. 2 twenty, and

Sherry fifty, judging from her feelings when she dropped the salad.

"All wrong, of course," Polly said, sitting up and producing the pedometer. "It is six rods from the tables through the long dining-room and anteroom to the supplies in the kitchen," she said, "and we went forward and back, forward and back, like you do in a cotillion, till we walked nearly two and a half miles, —enough to make a minister swear or sweat this hot day."

"Oh-h!" came simultaneously from the three girls on the steps, each feeling more tired than before, and each thinking with dread of the next day and the miles which lay before her.

Naturally there was a discussion with regard to the guests and the Marshes and Alex., whom Polly pronounced "O. K." She was the slangy one of the quartette, and kept them amused and laughing until the stable clock struck eleven, when they started for the house, which the *chef* was beginning to shut up.

When alone in her room, Sherry stood a long time looking out upon the hills and valley bathed in the moonlight, and listening to the voices in front of the house calling good-night as the guests separated to their rooms. Alex. seemed to be everywhere, and the last Sherry heard he was saying to Charley Reeves, "Good-night, old chap, I hope we shall all have a good time. I mean you shall." In Alex.'s voice there was a richness and a heartiness which always rang true, and Sherry's last thought as she fell asleep was, "If all the world were like Mr. Marsh there would be no lack of good times."

CHAPTER X

THE CEDAR CHEST

The next day was passed much as days in a mountain-house party are usually passed. The weather was perfect. A slight shower in the early morning had cooled the air and freshened the foliage and grass, and the valley lay basking in the glorious sunshine of a summer day. There were drives along the mountain road and wheeling on the smooth path by its side. Three or four of the older guests went to Mount Washington. At four o'clock the tally-ho was brought out, and the Alpine horn went echoing up and down the hills as the gay party swept by. They were certainly having a good time, and were loud in their protestations of delight when they at last met together in the drawing-room waiting for the summons to dinner. Thanks to Alex.'s instructions, this was not more than half as long as the first had been, and Polly's pedometer registered only a mile and a quarter when it was over. Sherry was not tired at all, but came near forgetting herself once or twice in her absorption in the conversation at the different tables, which she could hear as they were near each other. Some of the party had explored the attic and examined the quaint old furniture, and expressed interest

and curiosity in the chest, wondering what it contained.

"I can tell you in part," Alex. said. "It is the wardrobe of a lady who lived here a hundred years ago, for what I know. She is buried in that little cemetery across the road. My great-uncle, Mr. Marsh, used to air them, Bowles told me, and he talked a good deal about a flowered silk that would stand alone."

"Oh-h!" and a chorus of voices broke in together. "Just the things for a masquerade, or costume party, or tableaux. Can't we get into the chest?"

Sherry held her breath as she listened to Alex.'s reply.

"Why, yes. I don't know where the key is, but we can wrench off the padlock. I suppose the chest belongs to me if the house does."

"Certainly it does," his mother said, while Charley Reeves, who sat at the table nearest to Alex., asked:

"Who were the aborigines, anyhow?"

"Crosby's," Alex. answered. "They owned the place first years and years ago, and if I knew where any of the descendants were living I should feel inclined to send them the old chest, if they cared for it. It seems as if the clothes should belong to them. I have no use for them. There is a relative of the Crosbys in New York,—a woman without sentiment, I should say, who would not care for such old truck. It is young people who go in for relics. Mrs. Pledger seems like one herself. Maybe you have heard of Joel Pledger? Almost every one has, though his name was new to me till recently."

"Joel Pledger,—old Pledger, the money lender? I rather think I have," Charley replied. "He helped me through a tight place when I was in college and the governor in Europe. The interest he charged, though, was frightful. But I paid it, or father did. He has been a good Samaritan to a lot of college boys, but always got good interest. They say he is rich as Crœsus. Do you know him?"

"No, I've seen him. Drives a queer old rattle-trap in the Park when he might have his carriage, they say. I've met Mrs. Pledger, who would have given me the family history if I'd had time to listen," Alex. said, with a thought of the girl whom Mrs. Pledger called Sherry, and who was now standing by him with his coffee, her hand shaking so that a part of it was spilled in the saucer.

Alex. did not care for the spilled coffee. His thoughts were on the Pledgers, or rather the girl, and he wondered if Charley had ever seen or heard of her. He would *finesse* and find out, and he said:

"These Pledgers have no children, I believe, or young people, who would like the chest?"

"None that I know of," Charley answered. "I've not the pleasure of Mrs. Pledger's acquaintance. I was in the house once to see Joel, but she was gone; regular old crow's-nest, and a maid who hollered up the stairs, 'Mr. Pledger, here's a gentleman come to see you in a carriage.' I did hear, though, a rumor of a deuced pretty girl who visited them once. Maybe she is a Crosby, with a right to the chest."

"By George! I never thought of that," Alex. said

to himself, beginning to feel unwilling to have the chest opened and its contents appropriated by strangers, and to wonder if he ought not to write to Mrs. Pledger and ask if the girl was a Crosby.

He never dreamed that she was there close to him, her face so white that his mother noticed her at last and asked if she were ill.

"Oh, no," Sherry answered, pulling herself together and trying to seem natural, as she attended to her duties with her ears strained to catch every word of the conversation concerning the chest.

All the guests were talking of it now, saying they must have it opened and see what ladies wore sixty or seventy years ago. Alex.'s spirits had gone down with thoughts of the girl, but the pressure was so great that he agreed to see what they could do tomorrow, and with this the party left the dining-room.

The next morning was rainy, precluding any outdoor amusements, but just the time for an inspection of old Mrs. Crosby's wardrobe, some of the young people said, as they gathered at the breakfast table. Sherry, who was at her post, was feeling wretchedly, and could scarcely keep on her feet. The night before, when no one saw her, she had gone to the attic and looked at the chest and tried to move it from the wall, thinking she might find the key, if it was still where Mrs. Pledger had said it was kept years ago. But it was heavy, and she had returned to her room with a feeling that she ought to prevent its contents from being desecrated by stranger hands. Her great-grandmother's bridal dress was probably there, and Sherry

tried to fancy her as she must have looked on that night of the great Crosby party. It was a long time before she could sleep, she was so excited about the chest and what she had heard of the Pledgers, and what Charley Reeves had said of the "deuced pretty girl" who had visited the "old crow's nest," where the maid "hollered up the stairs." She was the girl, no doubt, but the compliment paid her was lost in the sting of the maid and the "crow's nest," and she tossed from side to side until at last she fell asleep and dreamed that her grandmother came to her clad in heavy brocade silk, with jewels in her ears and knots of old point lace on her sleeves and at her bosom and on the shoulders, and on her head a white bonnet with pink bows and wide ribbon strings.

"Come," she had said, beckoning to Sherry, who went with her to the attic, where together they drew the chest a little from the wall, and her grandmother showed her the key to the padlock hanging on a tack which had been driven into the wood, just as Mrs. Pledger had said it was.

Then she woke suddenly, bathed in perspiration, and with a feeling that she had really been to the attic and found the key. She did not try to sleep again and rose early, with a nervous headache, a sense of depression unusual to her and a sensation of trying to recall something which came almost within the grasp of her memory and then eluded it. Her dream was still so vivid that she half resolved on going to the attic to see if the key was really hanging behind the chest. By this time there was a good deal of stir

in the house. Servants were moving about. She might be seen and her actions wondered at. She would wait developments, but her nervousness increased and her face grew whiter when at breakfast she heard plans for opening the chest.

"Let's go and have a look at the old thing. I don't suppose the party across the road under the sod will care, do you?" Charley Reeves said when breakfast was over, and with Alex. at their head some of the guests were soon climbing the narrow stairs to the attic. "Jolly, what a big room this is! I wonder you don't have it finished up for a dancing hall," Charley said.

"What would I do with the truck?" Alex. asked.

"Sell it at auction. Every article would bring a thundering price if you labelled it a century old, as it must be," Charley replied, sitting down in a carved chair, the back of which gave way and sent him to the floor amid the jeers of his companions.

Picking himself up, he went with the others to the chest, where Alex. was standing with a puzzled look on his face. When he saw it the day before he was sure it was close against the wall and a little under the rafters, where it would be out of the way. Now one end of it was moved five or six inches. Somebody must have been there, and who? Not one of his guests, surely, and if some one else had a curiosity with regard to its contents, it was time he opened it and saw for himself what it contained. A thought of the pretty girl who had visited the Pledgers had haunted him continually since Charley had spoken

of her, and he could not shake off a feeling that if she were a Crosby or a remote connection, she had a better right to the chest than himself and the gay crowd clamoring to have it opened.

"I guess I'll have to do it," he thought, taking hold of one end and finding it heavier than he had anticipated.

"Where's the key?" Charley asked, and Alex. replied:

"Lost or stolen. I must go for something to pry off the padlock."

Sherry's room was in the hall from which the stairs led to the attic and only three doors from it. She had gone up to bathe her throbbing head, and as her door was open she heard what Alex. said.

"I have half a mind to tell him to look behind the chest. I believe the key is there, my dream was so vivid," she thought, and stepped into the hall just as Alex. came down the stairs.

"Oh, Fanny," he said, "if you are going to the kitchen, won't you please send Mark up with a wrench, file and screw-driver? I am going to open the chest."

Sherry's impulse to speak of the key left her suddenly, as she thought she would probably be questioned as to how she knew it was there, and, bowing to Alex., she went to the kitchen and found the file and wrench, but not Mark, the boy of all work.

"I'll take them myself," she said, and, returning with them, she met Amy in the hall just going to the attic and gave them to her.

Her head was still aching, and she had that strange feeling or fatigue she had felt in the early morning.

"I'll rest a minute," she thought, sitting down in her room near the open door, where she could hear distinctly what was said in the attic.

Ruth Doane was saying to Amy: "I was right when I thought I heard some one up here last night dragging something on the floor. The chest has been moved from the wall."

"No!" Amy exclaimed in surprise, while Sherry felt as if a heavy blow had been struck her. Her dream was true in part.

She had not seen her grandmother, but she had been in the attic. The habit of her childhood, which she hoped she had outgrown, had come back, and she knew why she felt so weak and depressed. She had always felt this way after walking in her sleep. She had dreaded these fits of somnambulism, and rejoiced when they left her, and she could not understand why they had returned, unless induced by the unusual strain upon her nerves since coming to Maplehurst and from thinking so much of the chest.

"Yes, it was that," she said to herself. "It was in my mind when I went to sleep, and that is why I got up. I must have had a great deal of strength to move that chest. But it seems I did it. I was always strong when I was in this sleep. Did I really find the key, and where did I put it if I did? I used to hide things. Oh, this is dreadful!"

In a dazed kind of way she began to look for the key, a cold, clammy sweat breaking out through every

pore when she found it in her work-box. For a moment she recoiled from it as from something uncanny, then, picking it up, she whispered: "I must take it to them and tell them, and that it is my great-grandmother's chest."

She heard the rasping sound of the file as she began to ascend the stairs, and tried to hurry, when she was suddenly stopped by Alex.'s voice, sounding just as it did in the dining-room when she dropped the salad and saying nearly the same words: "Sherry, go down. You are not wanted here."

But for the railing on the side of the staircase she would have fallen, she grew so faint and dizzy.

"Yes, I'll go," she thought, feeling her way back to her room, where she shank into a chair, with her hands over her eyes and her brain in such a whirl that she did not think of the dog until she felt his paws on her shoulders and his hot breath on her face.

Uncovering her eyes, she saw him looking at her, with an expression so human and full of pity that she put her arms around his neck, and burying her face in his long mane began to cry.

"You dear old dog," she sobbed; "it was you he meant and not me. I might have known it, but I couldn't think, I feel so queer."

The dog's answer was a low whine as he capered round her with little barks of joy.

"Hush, hush," she said, trying to quiet him. "They must not know I am here unless I take the key, as I suppose I ought."

Just then there came to her cries of delight. The

chest was opened and the young ladies were going into raptures over its contents, while Charley Reeves was careering around the attic with a white silk bonnet on his head ornamented with pink satin bows and long streamers of wide ribbon for strings. It was Mrs. Crosby's wedding bonnet of a fashion seventy years back, and the young ladies were wild over it, as they were over everything.

"They do not need the key," she thought. "I'll keep it, and before I go away I'll give it to Mr. Marsh and tell him the truth."

Dropping it into her work-box, she went downstairs, followed by the dog, who made many ineffectual attempts for her to play with him, as she had often done during her leisure hours.

"Not now, doggie," she said, patting his head. "I can't call you Sherry, but next time I hear your master do so I trust I shall have sense enough to know he does not mean me. Three times and out!"

She was beginning to feel better and went about her work with her usual energy, although still depressed when she thought of the return of the somnambulistic habit and what it might lead to.

CHAPTER XI

THE FANCY DANCE

"WHAT do you think *has* happened and is going to happen?" Polly said, as they were laying the tables for lunch.

Polly generally managed to know what was going on, and was bursting with her news, which she began to impart. They had opened the old chest, she said, and it was full of brocades and laces and mulls, though she didn't know what that was,—some kind of muslin, she believed,—and pongees and high-heeled, pointed slippers and jewelry and a fine white gown and piles of bed and table linen. The gowns were spread out in Miss Marsh's room and smelt like dead folks, and they were all in there screeching with delight, and telling what they meant to do, and trying the length of the gowns to see who they would fit, "and, oh, dear Suz, such times as we are going to have! And, oh, I forgot the queer part. Somebody had moved the chest in the night. Miss Doane heard 'em walking softly, as if in their stocking feet, and heard the scrape on the floor. Mother Groves will be asking us next if we were up there. Let her. I can prove an alibi. Here she comes!"

Polly stopped, silenced by the appearance of Mrs. Groves, who came to look over the tables and see that

everything was in order. Since Alex.'s interference with the length of the dinner that lady had subsided a good deal.

If Mr. Marsh was going to run things, he could run them, she confided to the *chef,* who replied:

"'F I'se you, I'd let him. Girls is a ticklish lot to manage. Better give 'em a long rope."

And Mrs. Groves had given them quite a length of rope, but kept her eyes pretty close on Sherry, whose chin in the air still annoyed and irritated her. On this occasion she stopped to find fault with some trivial arrangement which she wished changed, and then, as Polly had predicted, said to them: "Young women, someone, I hear, was in the attic last night and moved the cedar chest; for what purpose I don't know, unless to get into it. I took you all for honest girls, and shall be sorry to find I was mistaken. No. 4, were you in the attic last night?"

"No, ma'am!" and Polly squared her elbows as for a fight.

"No. 3, were you there, or do you know who was?" Mrs. Groves continued, while No. 3's denial was as prompt as that of No. 4.

"No. 2, what do you know of it? Were you there?" was Mrs. Groves' next question.

"If I were I did not know it, and went in my sleep," was the reply of No. 2, for which Sherry blessed her, as it made her answer easy.

She was very white, with a look of defiance in her dark eyes, and another,—a strange, far-off look such as they always had after one of her somnambulistic

fits. Mrs. Groves noticed it, and hesitated a little before she said, "Fanny, were you there?"

The *Fanny* was a great concession,—made Mrs. Groves hardly knew why, except that with all her dislike of the girl she had a kind of respect for her.

"If I were there I was asleep and did not know it," Fanny answered, with a decided upward tilt of her chin, and a flash in her eyes as she continued fearlessly: "If you and Mr. Marsh think either of us would be guilty of trying to break open a chest which did not belong to us, you should dismiss us at once."

She looked like a young queen as she stood there with that strange shifting light in her eyes, and for a moment Mrs. Groves herself was quelled.

"Mr. Marsh has said nothing to me about it," she answered. My information came from another source, and as matron here it is my duty to inquire into things and keep order if I can."

Sherry bowed her head, while Mrs. Groves departed, with Polly taking a few mimicking steps behind her.

"Oh, Polly!" Nos. 2 and 3 began, when Mrs. Groves was gone. "How did you hear all the stuff you are telling us? You surely have listened."

"Not a bit of it," Polly answered. "I was in my room near the attic stairs, and heard the squeals as they took out the things, and saw them bring 'em down to Miss Marsh's room, and Mr. Reeves had put on a white bonnet with pink strings and a pair of stays, which looked like a saddle, and I heard 'em say the things were nearly a hundred years old, and

belonged to that lady buried across the road. If I'se her, I'd appear to 'em, making fun of my clothes. They are to have a fancy dance and wear her things as far as they go. But, for the land's sake, what's the matter?" and she turned to Sherry, whose face was white as the lunch cloth and who was clutching a chair for support.

"Nothing much," Sherry answered. "I did not sleep well and have a nervous headache. Go on and tell us of the fancy dance. When is it to be?"

Polly didn't know. "We shall hear about it at lunch," she said, and they did. The young people were all talking of the chest, wondering who could have moved it, and why, but soon dropping that for the more absorbing topic of the fancy dance to come off within a week, as at the end of that time some of them were to leave. People were to be invited from the different hotels in the vicinity; there was to be a string band from Fabyan's, and the young ladies were to draw lots as to which should wear the dresses unearthed in the cedar chest, and which were in a good state of preservation. Twice a year they had been aired as long as Amos Marsh lived at Maplehurst, and on the occasion of his last visit there he had had them out, as Alex. remembered having been told by Bowles, who drove him from the station when he first visited the farm. The man had spoken of a "flowered silk," and when, after lunch, Alex. went to Amy's room to see the finery, he recognized the "flowered silk" in the heavy brocade at which the girls were looking with eager eyes, each hoping the

right to wear it would fall upon herself. The lots were drawn and the brocade fell to Amy.

"Eureka!" she cried, holding the dress at arm's length and pirouetting around the room. "I am in luck, but it needs a great deal of fixing to fit me, and who can do it?" Then, remembering how handy Sherry had been in helping her on the first night of her arrival, she continued: "I believe that girl who waits on us is just the one. I'll have her up. Call her, Alex."

He called her, and Sherry came, wondering why she was sent for, and starting when she saw the display on chairs and tables and the bed, the lovely brocade and the lace trimming, yellow with age, but showing how costly it must have been. The room was full of the sickly odor of clothes which had been long shut from the air, and Sherry felt it and held fast to the brass rod of the bedstead, while Amy explained what was wanted and asked if she could do it. Sherry knew she could, for she and Katy had always made their own dresses, but her first impulse was to decline. Then, remembering that she was there to obey, she signified her willingness to do what she could. "But not to-day, please," she said. "My head aches; to-morrow I shall feel better."

"To-morrow, then," Amy replied; "and, by the way, we shall need you all day, and I will see that No. 4 waits upon us. Her table is next to ours."

That night Sherry slept a quiet, dreamless sleep, and Miss Doane was not disturbed by noises over her head in the attic where the cedar chest stood open,

with piles of things in it as yet untouched. The dresses were what were wanted for the present, and after breakfast Sherry presented herself in Amy's room and asked what she was to do.

"Make this fit me. It is too big in some places and too small in others," Amy said, putting on the brocade and examining herself before the mirror.

To Sherry it seemed like a wrong to the dead woman as she pinned and unpinned and ripped and basted and tried on, and when it came to the lace, which Amy said must be cut in two or three places to produce the desired effect, she ventured to say: "Can't we arrange it in some other way? It seems a pity to cut it, and I keep thinking of the lady who used to wear it."

Amy looked at her, wondering what possible interest she could have in the lady who used to wear it.

"Oh, she was dust and ashes long ago. She don't mind," she said, "and as the dress is now mine I want it as I like. So cut the lace here and here."

Sherry hesitated a moment, and then her scissors slashed through the expensive material, which had cost a fabulous sum and been the wonder and admiration of the neighborhood. It was a hard day for Sherry, working on the old dresses and listening to the talk in which she could take no part. She was for the time being only a seamstress, whose duty was to be silent. The young ladies were well-bred and kind-hearted, and would not willingly injure the feelings of any one, but reared as they had been they

felt there was an immeasurable distance between themselves and the girl who sat all day long in their midst, unnoticed except when wanted for advice or for some change in the dresses. She was very pretty, they thought, and very ladylike, and certainly understood her business.

"You must have worked in a dressmaking establishment, you are so deft with your needle and have such good taste," one of them said to her, and she replied:

"I have made my own dresses, with my sister's help."

Amy, who had felt a good deal puzzled by Sherry, now began to question her.

"You have a sister?"

"Yes."

"And a mother?"

"Yes."

"Is your father living?"

"No."

"And your home is in the country?"

"Yes."

"Where, if I may ask?"

If Mrs. Groves could have seen Sherry then, she would have thought her head and chin higher than ever in the air. She was resenting being catechised so closely, but answered the last question promptly:

"In Buford, Massachusetts."

"Buford?" Amy repeated. "Why, the Saltuses' summer home is in Buford. Did you ever see them,

Mr. Craig Saltus and his sister? You must have heard of them."

"Yes, I have heard of them."

"Is their place a very fine one?"

"Yes, very fine."

"Inside as well as out? Perhaps, though, you were never inside. Were you?"

"Yes."

"And have met Miss Saltus?"

"Yes."

"I hear that she is very familiar with the country people. Invites them and accepts their invitations."

As this was not a direct question Sherry did not feel called upon to answer. Her eyes were blazing with scorn at the questioning, which might have gone on if Ruth Doane had not called to her cousin and said: "For Heaven's sake, Amy, don't spend any more time talking of the Saltuses when we have so much to do; and I want to know if I can have this lovely scarf. See how it becomes me."

She was draping around her head and neck a beautiful scarf of Spanish lace which Mrs. Crosby had brought from abroad and which was very becoming to Ruth's dark style of beauty.

"Yes, you can have it," Amy said, and as she could learn nothing in particular from Sherry she gave her up, but said to one of her friends: "Rose Saltus and I are great friends, although not at all alike. I hoped she might be here this summer, but she has to stay with her mother. But her brother Craig is coming soon. I hope he will be here for

the party, though he can't dance. What a pity he is so lame!"

Sherry was interested now, and her cheeks burned as she thought of Craig Saltus recognizing her as an acquaintance and friend, as she knew he would. She had heard from Mrs. Groves something about the Saltus family coming, but time had passed and they had not come, nor had she heard of them again until now, when she felt every nerve quiver with apprehension and dread. Rose Saltus had been very kind to her and so had Craig, and she wondered what he would say when he found her there.

"He will think me an impostor, and I begin to feel like one," she thought, half resolving to leave before Craig Saltus came.

But something kept her, and for three days Polly waited upon her table, while she worked on the costumes, in which she became a good deal interested, especially the brocade which Amy was to wear, and which was made to fit her perfectly, thanks to Sherry's deft fingers and taste. She had cut out a piece here and added a gore there, and made the waist lower so as to show Amy's fine neck, and with every swish of her scissors she had felt she was inflicting bodily pain upon the great-grandmother she had never seen or scarcely heard of until recently. When the dress was done, Amy, who was about her size and figure, had asked her to put it on, that she might see how it looked and if there were any changes to be made. And Sherry put it on, and stood as a model while Mrs. Marsh and the young ladies and

Alex. and Charley Reeves were called in to see what a beautiful dress it was.

"By George!" was all Alex. said, and then walked out.

He did not think it just the thing for Amy to make a model of Sherry to be gazed at, and when Charley Reeves said to him, "I say, Marsh, No. 1 is a stunner," he felt for a moment as if he hated Charley for speaking thus of Sherry. What business had he to call her a stunner or speak of her as No. 1? He never did. He always called her Fanny and had a growing conviction that she was out of place as a waitress. When he could get time he'd find out somehow. Just now he was too busy with his preparations for the ball, which was to excel anything ever seen in the neighborhood. He had heard from Bowles, who had it from his grandfather, of the great Crosby party, talked of so long by the people. Just what they did at that party neither he nor Bowles knew.

"It was up to snuff," Bowles said; "with grandees from all over, and dancing till four in the morning, and some of the grandees rather noisy with too much wine."

Alex. did not mean to have anything of that sort. Otherwise everything should be first class; and he was busy everywhere and tired to death, he said, when the day came for what he called his "blow out."

"You will have to help me dress," Amy said to Sherry on the day of the party, and after dinner,

which was served earlier than usual, Sherry found herself acting in the capacity of maid to Amy, whose hair she arranged and whose dress she put on, adjusting a ribbon here and a knot of lace there, fastening a brooch of pearls and rubies at her throat and long pendants in her ears."

"How do I look?" Amy asked, when her toilet was completed.

"I think you will be the belle of the evening," Sherry answered, and Amy, who was beginning to be strangely drawn towards this girl whom she could not understand, said, next: "You will want to see the dance. There will be a crowd looking in at the windows from the piazza, and if you like come in and sit by the door."

It was a good deal for Amy to unbend in this way, and she felt chagrined that Sherry did not seem more impressed with the permission to sit by the door.

"Thanks. You are very kind," was all she said, as she left the room.

"She is an enigma," Amy thought. "I mean to ask Craig Saltus about the family. He must have heard of them. Let me see,—Sherman is her name, I believe, though I only know her as Fanny, or No. 1. Queer fad of Mrs. Groves to designate them by numbers. This girl is certainly superior to the rest and has done my dress beautifully."

It was time now for the expected guests to arrive, and pleased with herself, Amy went down to meet them. The night was fine. There was no moon, but the stars were out in full force, and the lanterns on

the lawn and the reflectors on the piazza made it almost as light as day on three sides of the house, which presented a fairy scene after the dancing had commenced. As Amy had predicted, there were many lookers on. Young people from the different farmhouses in the neighborhood came to see the sight, and with the servants of the house crowded around the windows, watching the dancers, and occasionally, as the music became more and more exhilarating, taking a few steps themselves. Sherry was not with them, nor in the chair where Amy had told her she could sit and look on. With the first strain of music a wave of homesickness swept over her, and she would have given much to have been with her mother and Katy. It was a mistake coming here as she did. She was feeling it more and more, and had had hard work to keep back her tears ever since the guests began to arrive and she was free to do what she pleased. Going to the far end of the piazza, which looked towards the stables, she sat down in the shadow and listened to the sounds of revelry as they came to her from the other side of the house. If there was one thing she liked more than another it was to dance, and she kept time to the music with her hands and feet, until at last, as the strains of her favorite waltz came floating on the night air, she sprang up and began to whirl round and round half the length of the piazza and back to her chair, where she stopped a moment to take breath and then began her solitary dance again, shutting her eyes as she felt a little dizzy, and seeing nothing until she found herself in

the arms of a young man coming from the opposite direction.

Alex. was having a good time, and, satisfied that his "blow out" bade fair to equal the Crosby party and that everybody was having a good time, he had started for the kitchen to tell the *chef* that refreshments were to be served in half an hour. As he turned on to the side piazza, his nearest route to the kitchen, he caught the notes of the soft-toned, even-timed waltz, which was his favorite as well as Sherry's, and saw the white figure coming towards him in the half shadows on that side of the house. Thinking it was his cousin Ruth, he began to whirl until he caught the figure in his arms, held it close to him and kept on till he reached a side light and saw that it was Sherry.

Wrenching herself from his arms, while her eyes flashed and her lips quivered, she said, "Mr. Marsh, how dare you insult me?"

"By George!" Alex. exclaimed, holding her hands in spite of her efforts to draw them from him. "I beg your pardon. I thought you were Ruth. You are about the same size, and that waltz got into my head. I meant no disrespect. I hope you will excuse me."

He was apologizing to her as to a lady, and the angry look in her eyes began to soften and the tears to fill them. She couldn't keep them back, and as Alex. held her hands they dropped upon her cheeks and stood upon her lashes.

"Fanny," Alex. said, soothingly. "Don't cry.

You make me feel like a cad. I never insulted a woman in my life. I certainly would not begin with you. Why do you cry?"

"I don't know, unless I am a little homesick," Sherry replied, getting her hands free and wiping her tears away, while Alex. thought how beautiful she was, seen under that light.

As she met his look of admiration, which she could not mistake, she stepped back and continued: "I like to dance, and that waltz brought things back and made me think of home."

"Yes, I see," Alex. answered. "Of course you like to dance. Suppose we take another turn across the piazza."

He held out his arms, but Sherry shook her head. She knew what was proper better than he, and said, "I think you'd better go. Your guests will be missing you."

"Let them miss me," Alex. said, with a feeling that he would rather stay there and talk to this girl, who fascinated and puzzled him, and whose face grew each moment lovelier as her smiles came and went and her eyes beamed upon him. "Fanny," he said, impulsively, "haven't I seen you before?"

Sherry shook her head, and he continued: "Then I have dreamed of you, or some one like you. I have it," and he snapped his fingers exultingly; "I saw a girl at the opera with old,—I beg your pardon,—with the Pledgers more than a year ago. She was very like you. Queer, isn't it? Where is your home?"

Before she could answer him there was a loud call for "Alex., Alex., where are you? We want you in the Lancers."

"I must go, as I have to see the *chef*. I'd forgotten him entirely. You are sure you have forgiven me? I couldn't help it, and you waltz as if you had been at it all your life," Alex. said, offering her his hand, in which for answer she laid hers, blushing and withdrawing it quickly as she felt his fingers closing over it with a warm pressure.

The next moment he was gone, and when Sherry next saw him she, with Nos. 2, 3 and 4, was waiting upon his guests, while her cheeks burned as she recalled the waltz upon the piazza and felt again the pressure of Alex.'s hand and heard the tone of his voice as he called her Fanny and told her not to cry.

It was late before the party broke up, and later still before Alex. fell into a disturbed sleep, in which he dreamed of the lovely face which had looked at him so wistfully that he would liked to have kissed it. Other faces which had been close to his and other forms which had been in his arms, with no attempt to withdraw from them, were also in his dreams, as he lived over the events of the night, but Sherry was always to the front, and he was beginning a second waltz with her when Amy pounded at his door, telling him that breakfast had been over an hour and that some of them were going for a drive.

CHAPTER XII

THE SOMNAMBULIST

The day after the dance passed rather quietly, as the young people were tired and preferred lounging upon the piazzas or under the trees to any great exertion. The costumes taken from the cedar chest had been carefully folded and returned to it, ready for the next time, Amy said. The folding and putting away had fallen to Sherry, who took the dresses and jewelry to the attic, laying them carefully in the chest and pausing a moment to open what proved to be the family Bible of Eli Crosby, and which was near the bottom.

"Oh, I wish I could have this," she thought, and was about to examine it further when Amy came up the stairs, and she closed the book hastily, noticing, as she did so, that it contained two or three loose papers. "Some business papers of grandfather Crosby's, I dare say," she thought, and all day her mind was upon the cedar chest and its contents.

As the afternoon drew to a close a thunder storm came up and the night shut in hot and sultry. The young people were tired, and after a few ineffectual efforts to enjoy themselves, as Alex. wished them to do, they retired to their rooms, and at a very early hour quiet had settled upon the house. Alex. was

sleeping soundly when there came a knock upon his door and Amy's voice called to him, "Alex., Alex., are you awake?"

"Yes,—no. What is it? Is the house on fire?" he answered drowsily; and Amy continued in a whisper, "Dress you and come quick. There's some one in the attic."

"Nonsense!" Alex. said, springing up and soon joining his sister, who explained that she and Ruth had heard footsteps going up the stairs and then had heard them overhead.

They could not be mistaken. There was some one in the garret, probably the same who had moved the chest,—a burglar, perhaps, and she advised Alex. to bring his revolver or call Charley Reeves.

"Nonsense!" he said again, going with his sister and Ruth to the hall, at the end of which were the attic stairs, where they stopped to listen.

There certainly was some one in the attic moving cautiously, when he moved at all, and Alex. at once started to go up. But Amy held him back.

"Don't, don't," she whispered. "You might get hurt. Whoever is there must come down. We can sit here and wait. You have your revolver?"

"Revolver. No," Alex. answered, sitting where Amy bade him sit on a bench against the wall, which here made a little curve or alcove, so that while they could see distinctly any one coming down the stairs they could not be seen.

"There, he is coming," Amy and Ruth both exclaimed, clutching Alex. and holding their breath as

footfalls were heard upon the stairs and a glimmer of a light began to show itself in the darkness of the hall.

Amy and Ruth were trembling violently, while Alex. felt a little nervous as the light grew brighter and the steps came nearer. Then, with a smothered exclamation, he rose to his feet as Sherry came into view, carrying the brocade dress and the box of jewelry in one hand and in the other a candle, which she held raised directly in front of her, while she seemed to be looking steadily at it. She had on her dressing-gown and slippers, and her hair was falling over her shoulders. Her face was very pale, with a fixed and strained expression upon it, as if she were in pain or feeling her way over some dangerous place.

"It is Fanny. Who would have thought her a thief?" Amy gasped, while Alex.'s "Sh-sh!" came warningly.

"Don't you see she is asleep?" he said, and Amy continued, "Let's wake her, then."

"No, wait," Alex. answered, curious to know if Sherry would return to the attic for more goods.

She entered her room and they heard her moving around.

"Hiding the things," Amy said excitedly, but Alex. kept her quiet until Sherry reappeared, candle in hand, and went to the attic again.

She was not gone long, and when she came back she had the old Bible under her arm and walked very slowly, saying, as she was opposite them, "I'm so tired and this is heavy, but it is mine."

"Hers," Amy repeated, in so loud a tone that Sherry stopped as if to listen, but neither turned her head nor her eyes.

Then she went into her room and shut the door.

"Aren't you going in to wake her now?" Amy asked, and Alex. replied, "Certainly not. It would frighten and mystify her."

"Yes, but my dress and jewels! She is welcome to the old Bible," Amy continued; and Alex. replied, "They are safe. When she finds them in the morning she will put them back or bring them to us, and feel crushed and humiliated, no doubt. Go to bed, and hold your tongues. No one but ourselves need know what we have seen. The poor girl has had her mind so full of the dresses and is so tired working on them as she did and then waiting upon us so late last night that she is walking in her sleep. Not the first time probably."

He was ready to find excuses for her, and told his sister a second time to hold her tongue. It was not in Amy's nature to hold her tongue when there was an occasion to loosen it, and the occasion came at once. Mrs. Groves, whose room was at the end of the hall, and who boasted that she slept with one eye open, had heard the sound of voices, and coming from her room to investigate, met Amy and Ruth.

"What's the matter?" she asked. "Why are you here in your dressing-gowns, and what's that light doing at this time of night?"

She pointed to the light shining over the open transom of Sherry's door, and started in that direction.

"Don't go there," Amy said in a mysterious whisper, and then the whole story came out, Mrs. Groves listening with an incredulous sneer and look of exultation.

"I always mistrusted her and believed there was some mystery back of her, but didn't think she'd be up to quite so barefaced an act."

"But Alex. thinks she's asleep," Amy said, and Mrs. Groves replied: "That's a ruse to cover up the theft if discovered. She told one of the maids yesterday that she was homesick and believed she should go home. If she is asleep she will see the things in the morning and either take them back or tell you about it. If she does neither, depend upon it they are in her trunk and she is going to leave."

This seemed feasible, and with their minds a good deal unsettled with regard to Sherry, Amy and Ruth returned to their rooms. Early the next morning they stole up to the attic, finding Mrs. Groves there before them, looking into the chest, diving to the bottom and pulling the articles out. With an ominous shake of the head she said to them: "I told you so; they are not here, and she has been down more than an hour. She must have seen them. They are in her trunk. Sleep-walking! Fiddlesticks! I walked just as much."

"Seems as if she wanted to prove the girl guilty," Amy said, as she went down to the piazza, where she found Alex. and told him of Mrs. Groves' suspicions.

"Don't you believe her," he said. "She has never

liked the girl. She is always finding fault with her because she seems superior to the others, and is glad of a chance to hurt her."

And still he felt anxious, knowing Sherry must see the articles if they were in her room, and wondering what she would say. He found her standing by his mother's chair as usual when he went in to breakfast, and noticed how pale she was, with dark rings around her eyes, and how languidly she moved, as if very tired. Mrs. Marsh knew the story by this time, and half the guests besides, and Sherry felt instinctively that she was an object of more interest than usual as she waited upon the table. For aught she knew she had slept soundly. She had not dreamed, and could not account for her headache and weakness and the dreadful nausea which sometimes nearly overmastered her. A great aversion to the place had taken possession of her, with a desire to leave it.

"I don't think it agrees with me," she thought. "I'll make that an excuse and give notice this very day. I've had enough of it."

"I expected it," Mrs. Groves said, when some time during the morning Sherry announced her wish to leave, saying she was not feeling well and had not for some days.

"Mountain air is usually thought very healthy," Mrs. Groves said with a snap in her voice, "and your duties certainly are not so very great that you need to complain."

"I am not complaining of the work," Sherry re-

plied. "That is easy enough. But something ails me and I want to go home."

"I expected it," and Mrs. Groves' lips shut firmly together. "Will you go to-day?"

"Oh, no," Sherry answered, a good deal disturbed by Mrs. Groves' manner, which had never been quite as aggravating as it was now. "I will stay till you fill my place."

Mrs. Groves had not expected this. She thought Sherry would be glad to go at once before her theft was discovered, and she was anxious to be rid of her.

"No necessity for your waiting a day. We can manage very well. Polly is good for two tables, and some from the Reeves' table leave to-morrow, but keep your place till after lunch," was Mrs. Groves' vinegary response, and Sherry left her with a feeling that she had been dismissed, rather than dismissed herself, and also with a feeling of uncertainty as to whether she really wished to go.

There had not been as much fun in her lark as she had anticipated, but,—and she colored to the roots of her hair as she thought of Alex., whom she might never see again. But what did it matter? She could never be more to him than a girl whom he had employed, and to whom he had been kind, as he was to every one. She would go home, and start that afternoon if her head stopped aching. It was throbbing painfully, and black specks were floating before her eyes, sometimes obscuring her vision and again making her see double. "There is something the matter, and the sooner I get home the better," she

thought, and finding a cool place on the piazza, she sat down to rest until it was time for lunch, the last meal at which she would serve.

Meanwhile Mrs. Groves had been busy. Sherry's offer to stay until her place was filled did not look like guilt, but Mrs. Groves' mind was unchanged, and she hastened to report to Amy that No. 1 had given notice and was going that afternoon.

"That proves her guilt conclusively, and I told you so. Better see to it at once before she gets away. She ought to be made an example as a warning to the other girls," and her head and chin and the flabby flesh under it shook as she said it.

"What would you propose if we found the missing articles in her trunk? You would not have her arrested here?" Amy asked.

Her sympathy was a good deal with Sherry, whose look of suffering appealed to her.

"Of course I would not have her arrested, although she deserves it," Mrs. Groves replied. "Take the things away, and let her know that we all know her for what she is,—a thief!"

The word had an ugly sound to Amy, and still uglier to Alex. when applied to the girl in whom he found he had so great an interest. He fully believed in the sleep-walking, and had hoped that the articles would be returned to the chest, or that Sherry would speak of them. Neither had happened, and urged by Amy he made up his mind to ask her if she ever walked in her sleep.

"It is just to the girl to give her a chance to de-

fend herself against Mrs. Groves, who, I must say, is very bitter against her. I'll do it," Alex. said; "but will wait till after lunch, when Craig Saltus will be here. He must know of the girl's family in Buford, where he has a country house. I'll ask him about them. Craig always braces me up."

Craig had written that he would arrive on the eleven o'clock train, but Sherry knew nothing of it till lunch time, when she was rather late at her post. Her head was still aching frightfully with that nausea so hard to bear. Two or three times she had sat down overcome by dizziness before she could rally sufficient strength to go to the dining-room, where the sight and odor of the food nearly overmastered her as she moved slowly up to her table after all were seated, seeing the back of a strange man, but never dreaming who it was until she stood beside him.

"Why, Miss Sherman, you here! This is an unexpected pleasure. Alex. never told me," Craig exclaimed, offering her his hand, and as quickly as he could, on account of his lameness, getting upon his feet and beginning to pull out the vacant chair next to him.

Then sense and sight for a moment forsook Sherry, who would have fallen if Alex., too, had not risen and taken her arm.

"There is a mistake, and there has been one all the time," he said to Craig, who was looking at one and then another, but mostly at Sherry, whose white apron and cap struck him at last.

He knew what they meant, but why was she wear-

ing them, and why did Mrs. Marsh and Amy and Ruth seem so bewildered and Alex. so nervous, and why was Sherry so white?

An awful dizziness was coming over her again, and the black specks were thick before her eyes. Turning to No. 4, she said:

"Polly, will you take my place? I must have air."

She was white as a corpse, and the rings around her eyes grew darker as she left the room, with Alex. beside her.

"What is it, Miss Sherman?" he said, adopting the name Craig had given her. "Why have you never told us you were Craig Saltus' friend?"

"I don't know," Sherry answered faintly, as she sat down on the side piazza, where she had waltzed with Alex., and where the dog came bounding to her and began to lick her cold hands. "Go back," she said to Alex. "I shall be better alone. By and by I'll tell you why I was so foolish."

Alex. went back, finding his mother and Amy and Ruth in a state of great excitement, and Craig quite as much surprised, as each listened to the other and told what they knew of the young lady,—Miss Sherry Sherman, Craig called her, repeating to Alex. what he had already said to the ladies.

"One of the very best families in Buford," he said. "We know them well; and Rose is very fond of Sherry and her sister Katy."

"Sherry," Alex. exclaimed. "I thought her name was Fanny."

"So it is in part," Craig answered; "Fanny Sheridan Sherman, but she is called Sherry in Buford."

"Craig," Alex. gasped, a light beginning to break upon him, "is she related to old Pledger?"

"To Joel Pledger? Yes. You saw her in the box with him, you know, and asked me who she was."

"But you didn't tell me her name. You said his grand-niece," Alex. replied. "She interested me then. She has puzzled me ever since she came here. Why did she come?"

This question no one could answer, although Craig tried to do so.

"I think she is a little erratic by nature," Craig said. "I know she is fond of adventure, and probably the fancy struck her, as it does many young girls, to have some diversion in this line. You must have seen she was a lady?"

"Always," Alex. exclaimed. His interest in Sherry increased tenfold now that he knew she was the girl seen in old Peldger's box and never forgotten.

Amy said nothing. She was thinking of the dress and the jewelry, and wondering how they were to approach the subject. Questioning Fanny Sheridan Sherman, daughter of a clergyman and friend of Craig Saltus, was different from questioning No. 1. Alex., too, was worried, but it must be done, and the sooner it was off his mind the better. Going to the piazza, where he had left Sherry, he found her still there, with her eyes closed and the traces of tears on her face.

"Miss Sherman," he began, drawing a chair beside her, "I can't tell you how surprised I am, and glad that—" he began to stammer, not knowing how to finish the sentence, for Sherry's eyes were open now and fixed upon him. "Yes, I'm glad," he went on, "and when you are feeling better you will tell me about it. Now I must speak of something else,—something imperative. Did you ever walk in your sleep?"

Instantly a look of terror leaped into Sherry's eyes, and her hands grasped the arms of the chair in which she was sitting.

"Yes," she answered, "when I was a child. I hoped I had outgrown the habit, but it came back to me some days ago and I took the key."

"What key?" Alex. asked, and Sherry told him the story of the key, leaving out her dream of her grandmother and only saying, "I dreamed some one told me where it was."

Alex. was more puzzled than ever. Why was she so interested in the chest and its contents? He would ask her later. He must get over the most important part at once, and he said: "The brocade and jewelry and Bible disappeared last night. Do you know where they are?"

For a moment he thought Sherry had fainted, she sat so still and looked so white, and he put his hand on the one of hers nearest to him, and as she opened her eyes and looked at him he said, "Don't feel so badly; try and remember."

Then she rallied and said in a choking voice: "No,

I don't know where they are. Did I walk in my sleep, and is that why I feel so dizzy and tired this morning, just as I used to feel? *Did* I walk in my sleep?"

Alex.'s hand was still on hers, and he felt her cold fingers closing tightly round it; and there was the pallor of death on her face as he told her what he saw.

"Oh," she gasped, "this is dreadful! You saw me, and it must be true; but I do not remember dreaming at all as I usually do. I must have put the things in my closet. I did not see them as I opened the door this morning to hang up my dress. Your sister and Miss Doane saw me last night, too? Will you ask them to go with me to my room?"

"Let me see you there first," Alex. suggested, and Sherry did not refuse his help.

Her strength seemed to have left her, and her feet dragged heavily as she climbed the back stairs.

"Sit here till I return," Alex. said, placing her in a chair near the door and hurrying off for his sister and cousin, whom he found talking to Craig Saltus and telling him of last night's adventure.

"I remember hearing that she walked in her sleep when a child," he said. "She was little more than that when we first went to Buford. The whole town knew of it and were interested. She and Rose were great friends, and Rose had her once to spend the night with her, and she scared us all by getting up at midnight and starting for home."

This swept away any doubt Amy and Ruth might

have had with regard to Sherry, and they went with Alex. to her room, where she was sitting with her head dropped as if asleep, but she roused up when they came in, her lips quivering with a pitiful smile as she said: "I didn't know what I was doing. I have no remembrance of it. I never used to have when I woke. There was only a sick, dizzy, tired feeling, as if I had walked miles, or been terribly frightened. It is dreadful, and you saw me with them. They must be in the closet. Please look. I can't."

Amy and Ruth did the searching, while Alex. stood by Sherry, whose face was spotted when they brought out the brocade, which was hanging inside the closet where it could not be seen, if one merely opened the door as Sherry had done in the morning. The jewelry and Bible came next, and the three were placed upon the bed just as Mrs. Groves appeared in the doorway. She had been that morning to see a friend who was to leave that day and had just returned. Consequently she had not heard of Mr. Saltus' arrival, or of the scene at the table, nor of all that followed, filling the entire staff in the kitchen with wonder. She had started directly for her room, and hearing voices as she passed Sherry's door, looked in with a sinister expression on her face as she saw the articles on the bed and Sherry sitting white and limp in a chair, with Alex. standing over her as if to prevent her escape.

"So you've found 'em," she said. "I thought you would. Were they in her trunk?"

Instantly the terrible truth flashed upon Sherry that this woman believed her a thief, and it roused all her strength and courage. Springing to her feet and confronting her foe, she began: "And do you dare insinuate that I took the things knowingly and meant to carry them off? It is a fitting end to all the little mean tyrannies you have heaped upon me ever since I came. I have tried my best to serve you well, and you reward me by intimating that I am a thief. Oh, I can't bear it. Will no one stand between me and this dreadful woman?"

She was terribly excited, and her hands went up, beating the air frantically for a moment; then she stretched them toward Alex., as if asking for help, which he promptly gave. Taking her hands in his, he turned to Mrs. Groves and exclaimed: "Woman, leave this room at once, and never again be guilty of such an insinuation against Miss Sherman." And Mrs. Groves left, so astonished and shocked that she fairly ran through the hall to her own room, where she sat down more shaken up than she had ever been in her life. Was the world turning topsy-turvy and she turning with it? And was Alex. Marsh crazy, and why should that girl dare to talk so to her, Mrs. Groves, matron of Maplehurst, whom all the servants held in awe, if not in fear? What did it mean? She heard what it meant when Amy came to her after the interview with Sherry was over.

"Well, I never!" Mrs. Groves exclaimed, when the story came to an end. "Been masquerading as somebody else, has she? Do you call that honest and aboveboard?"

Amy had undertaken Sherry's championship, and she meant to carry it through.

"Certainly," she replied. "She told you her name was Fanny Sherman, from Buford, didn't she?"

"Yes," Mrs. Groves admitted rather reluctantly, and Amy continued: "That was true, and if she wished to hire out as a waitress she had a right to do so. She has made a good one, and I am sorry for her. We are all sorry."

Mrs. Groves dared not say to Amy all that was in her mind. She did not like Sherry, and she did not mean to like her if she belonged to a hundred good families and Craig Saltus had known her all her life. But she was quelled, and with her head high in the air excused herself, as she must see to some of her household affairs.

"I hope the girl is not going to be sick here. The land knows we have enough to do, and we are awful short with her being off."

Amy did not reply, and Mrs. Groves departed for the kitchen, talking to herself as she sometimes did when excited. Returning to Sherry's room, Amy began to fold up the dress, which still lay upon the bed, and as she did so she said to Sherry: "May I ask why you are so interested in the chest?"

Sherry hesitated, and then replied, "Because I think it belongs to Katy and me."

"Belongs to you!" Amy repeated. "What do you mean?"

Sherry felt that she could not talk much longer

before her strength gave out. There were lumps in her throat and a buzzing in her ears, and she saw things through a cloud of spots. Everything was slipping from her. She must explain quickly if she explained at all, and she began very rapidly:

"It was my great-grandmother's, Mrs. Crosby. She is buried across the way, and because she once lived here I had a fancy to come when I saw Mr. Marsh's advertisement; mother and Katy opposed me, but I was self-willed; the romance of the affair appealed to me. I wanted to see Maplehurst. I could not come as a guest and so I came as a waitress. I knew many young ladies did such things, and I thought I'd try it. Aunt Pledger of New York, who used to be here, told me of the chest and its contents, and said they were mine and Katy's, if still in existence. I did not stop to reason that when Mr. Marsh gave the house to your brother he probably gave him all there was in it. I was a foolish girl from the beginning. I thought it would be fun to come to my grandfather's old home *incog.* It has been anything but fun, and now it has come to this! Seeing the dresses and cutting into them worked on my brain and brought back the trouble of my childhood, making me seem like a thief. *She* thinks so, Mrs. Groves. She has never liked me. All the rest have been most kind."

Sherry's voice was now a whisper, for the lumps in her throat were choking her and rising higher and higher, until with her last words she broke into hysterical sobs, while her tears ran like rain through the fingers she pressed upon her face.

"Oh, Sherry, Sherry!" Alex. said, calling her by the name he thought the sweetest in the world. "Don't cry like that! You frighten me. It is all right; everything is right. The chest is yours and everything in it. Don't cry! Speak to her!"

He turned to Amy and Ruth, who stood appalled, not knowing what to say. Amy's wits came first, and going up to Sherry she said: "We are surprised, but we believe you and are sorry you are taking it so hard. You are tired and overwrought. Lie down. Rest will do you good."

Telling Ruth to put the dress and jewels and Bible back in the chest, Amy made Sherry lie down, spread a wet towel on her hot face and head, closed the blind to shut out the light, and then, with Alex., left the room, saying to him, when he suggested sending for a physician: "Wait awhile, she may be better to-morrow, and she does not want it talked about."

CHAPTER XIII

FINDING THE WRONG

That night Nos. 2, 3 and 4 took turns caring for Sherry, who had grown weak so fast that she could scarcely lift her head from the pillow. They knew now something of her story, and the most exaggerated rumors were afloat concerning her antecedents and why she was there.

"I never believed she was like us, or like *me,* anyway," Polly said. She had an air about her different, and that old hen of a Groves was always naggin' her. I hate her!"

It was Polly who stayed the longest with Sherry, and who said to Alex. in the morning, "I think she's awful sick and needs some one with her all the time. I'd stay with her if I didn't have to wait upon the table. Mrs. Groves is crosser than a bear because there are only three of us, and Mr. Saltus here."

Alex. did not reply, but it was a troubled face he took to his guests. He could not feel merry with that sick girl upstairs, and many times during the morning he stole to her door to inquire how she was.

As the day wore on Sherry did not rally, but lay with closed eyes, noticing no one except Alex. At the sound of his voice she always looked up and smiled,

saying once when he asked if she wished anything, "I want Katy."

They sent for Katy, who, on her way to Maplehurst, stopped in New York and told Mrs. Pledger of Sherry's illness.

"For gracious' sake!" that good woman said. "Sherry sick! I shall go with you and take a trained nurse. It will cost something, of course, for they ask abominable prices, but for once I can afford it, and Sherry must not die for want of care. I have taken a great fancy to her."

One of the best trained nurses in New York was found, and the three, Mrs. Pledger, Katy and the nurse, reached Maplehurst one afternoon, greatly to the disgust of Mrs. Groves, who did not yet believe Sherry's illness serious. She was nervous and tired and wanted to be let alone instead of having so much coddling. The girls, Nos. 2, 3 and 4, could sit up with her nights by turns, and if necessary *she* would for one night stay with her. She thought this a concession worthy of a martyr's crown. She did not know Katy had been sent for, and great was her surprise and consternation when the 'bus from the station deposited three women at the door, one of whom, Mrs. Pledger, at once took possession of everything pertaining to Sherry, even overshadowing the nurse in her orders and putting Mrs. Groves quite in the background. The kitchen was invaded at all hours, first by the nurse, who came in the discharge of her duties, and next by Mrs. Pledger, who came because she must see what was going on and give her

opinion. Katy stayed mostly with Sherry, who had smiled in token that she knew her and Mrs. Pledger, and had then fallen into a stupor from which it was hard to rouse her. Even Alex.'s voice failed. A slight movement of her head was all the response she gave when asked if she knew him. She was very ill, and a doctor from Bethlehem came every day, and most of the guests departed and a great hush fell upon the house where there had been so much hilarity. Alex.'s good times were slipping away, but he did not care. It had come to the point where Sherry was more to him than all the good times in the world, and if she died he would never know another, he said to himself, as he hovered near her door, or sat with Craig Saltus, who at his request remained at Maplehurst, and with whom he talked freely of Sherry and his feeling for her. He had been interested in her when he saw her at the opera. He had been interested in her ever since she came to Maplehurst.

He had stood between her and Mrs. Groves two or three times. He had waltzed with her on the piazza and felt a stir in his pulse such as no other girl had ever awakened, and when in her abasement at Mrs. Groves' cruel blow she had stretched out her hands to him as if for help and he had taken them in his, the work was completed and he knew that he loved her. Several times a day he went to the door of her room to see if anything was wanting, and the rest of the time he sat upon the piazza or under the maple tree, sometimes with Craig Saltus and sometimes with only the dog lying at his feet in a most subdued state,

never even noticing when a rabbit ran across the road to its home in the hillside. The dog had been to Sherry's room during the first of her illness and looked at her with wondering eyes. Then, failing to get any notice from her, he had gone downstairs and out into the yard where Alex. was sitting, and lifting up his head gave vent to his feelings in a howl which made Alex.'s blood curdle as he grasped the dog's throat and stopped him, talking to him as if he could understand that quiet was necessary if he would have his mistress live. He called Sherry his mistress, and the dog seemed to comprehend and never again gave vent to a sound which superstitious people, and some who are not superstitious, think a portent of evil. Every morning, however, he went to the door of Sherry's room, gave a low "woof-woof" by way of greeting, and then trotted back, sometimes to his kennel, but oftener to Alex., who felt his sympathy and was glad of his companionship.

From the first Mrs. Pledger had taken to Alex. as a young man "with as little nonsense as was often found in a city prig." Every day she reported Sherry's progress, and was the first to take the good news to him that the crisis was passed and Sherry much better. Then, sitting down beside him she began to talk of her uncle Crosby and his wife who died so young.

"I don't remember just how old she was," she said. "Twenty-four or five. It must be recorded on the grave-stone and in the family Bible in the chest, which is nearer. I'll go and see."

Mrs. Pledger was never quite happy unless she knew the exact date of the age she was hunting up. Leaving Alex. she went to the attic, and taking the Bible from the chest turned to the record of deaths. As she did so two papers fell out. Ruth had seen them when she carried the Bible back, but feeling that they did not concern her, had not glanced at them. Mrs. Pledger was of a different temperament. She wanted to know what they were, especially the one so yellow and tender that it almost came to pieces in her hand. It proved to be a deed given by Eli Crosby to Amos Marsh more than fifty years before. The other paper, which was much fresher, was a sheet of foolscap folded like a letter, marked "Private" and directed to "Alexander Marsh." But for the "Private" Mrs. Pledger would have opened it, but that deterred her, and she took both papers to Alex., who was in his usual seat under the maple. For a few minutes Mrs. Pledger stood, hoping Alex. would open the letter, but he didn't, and she turned to go, then stopped and said:

"I forgot to tell you that she was twenty-five and six months."

Alex. scarcely heard her or knew whom she meant. He was looking at the deed with a presentiment as if that yellow document were a message of evil to him. In the excitement of the good times he had been having at Maplehurst he had scarcely thought of the wrong he was to right, though he had fancied it had something to do with the farm. Of course he should right it if he ever found what it was, he said, and

had dismissed it from his mind. Now, however, it came back to him with this time-worn deed, which he read twice, wondering why it remained in Mr. Crosby's possession when by right it belonged to his Uncle Amos, who should have kept it with his papers.

"Possibly the letter will throw some light on it," he thought, and opening it at last he read it, while the cold sweat came out on his forehead and hands, making him shiver, although the day was hot.

"Nephew Alexander," it began, "I'm here in what was once my home, so-called, though never mine by right. I'm a wicked old man on the verge of the grave, and I cannot die till I have confessed a secret which I have borne for years because I had not courage to face the world which thinks me so good. I'm not good. I'm false to the core, and this is my story:

"Eli Crosby and I were fast friends. What one knew the other knew. If one wanted a favor the other granted it, and we helped each other over difficulties. He was a good man, free as water with his money, and when a friend asked his name to a note of four thousand dollars he gave it against my advice. Then, as some ugly rumors reached him, he came to me and said, 'I'll bet I'll have to pay that note, and if so it will take my farm. I've nothing else. What shall I do?'

"I thought a moment, and said: 'Deed it to me and give out that you have done so, but keep the deed yourself. The farm will be as much yours as it is mine, and when the trouble is over, if there is trouble, I will deed it back and no harm will be done.'

"I don't think he was quick to grasp an idea, but I made him understand, and when he hesitated and asked if it wasn't a fraud, I said: 'If it is it is often practised, and may save your farm.'

"He went through the form, the deed was drawn but was never delivered to me, but kept in his family Bible, where it is now. As God is my witness, I meant fair and honest at first. His wife was dead. I never married. Both of us were alone, and at his request I came to live with him as at my own home and called it mine. Three months after the transaction he went West and was brought back dead,—killed on the railroad. Two months later I heard the note was paid, and then the devil entered into me. I liked the farm, and did not want to give it up, or tell of the fraudulent sale, as I would have to do. Eli's only daughter had married and died, leaving a son, who had been sent through college and given a few thousand dollars, all Eli could spare. Where he was I didn't know. Eli was not quite pleased with his daughter's marriage, and after sending her boy to college, did not try to keep track of him. To make the story short, I did not tell that the place was not legally mine, and when people wondered what Eli had done with the price of the farm I knew no more than they did. There was a little from the sale of some of his effects, and a little in a bank. To this I added a thousand dollars, and sent it to the young man, Eli's grandson, who, by inquiry, I found was studying for the ministry. Then I settled down to enjoy my farm, but never knew a moment's real happi-

ness. That deed haunted me and Eli haunted me, too, till I could endure it no longer. As I would not add another sin to my soul by selling the farm when I could not give a clear title, I abandoned it and went to Denver. I saved all I could and put it in banks, feeling that some time I should make restitution. Eli's grandson was the Rev. Henry Sherman, who preached in Buford, Mass. I kept track of him after I found where he was. He is dead, but he has a widow and two daughters living. The farm is rightfully theirs, and the money too, the way I figure it. The ranch and Denver house are really mine. I bought them with means honestly my own.

"I might write all this to Harry's widow, but I'd rather tell you, my own kin. I have been to New York and seen Joel Pledger, whose wife was Eli's half sister. I've known her since she was a child. She was here once. I asked about you and your family. Joel knows everybody, whether dead beats or honest men. He spoke well of your reputation: 'Fashionable, but not fast,' he said.

"I am on my way home and have stopped at the old farmhouse, which is more haunted than ever. Rats and noises everywhere. Some things I left have been stolen, but, for a wonder, nobody has broken into the chest. It is heavy to handle. I found it under the rafters just where I pushed it when I left. The Bible is in it and the deed, and I made up my mind to write the whole thing out and put it in the Bible, with the deed. I am sure you will find it some day. It is hardly in nature that you will not open the chest,

you or your mother or sister. Bowles, the man who has had things in charge, has looked after them pretty well and knows there are women's clothes in it,—Mrs. Crosby's clothes, which I have taken out and aired. I shall hang the key on a little nail at the back of the chest, where it has hung for years. Somebody will find it.

"Sometimes I think I'll go back to New York and tell you everything or hunt up those Shermans and tell them. But I can't, I can't; so I write the story and pray God you may find it when I am gone. My lawyers have urged me to make a will, but don't you see, I'd have to tell why the farm and the money in the bank was not mentioned. I'm a coward, but am trying to make restitution and right the wrong. The old place does not seem worth much in the present condition of the house, but, much or little, it is theirs. Forgive your old uncle, and find those girls.

"Amos Marsh."

This was the letter, and for a few minutes Alex. felt as if all power to move had left him. There was a blur before his eyes, and still the glare of sunlight hurt them, and he closed them to shut it out. Then he opened them and looked around him—at the handsome house, where he had had such good times and hoped to have more; at the stretches of pasture, where his cows were feeding; at the meadows and fields, where his men were gathering a late growth of hay, and at the wooded hills in their cool summer dress. "It is a goodly heritage, but not mine," he said, with

a groan, just as Amy came out and sat down beside him, asking why he looked so sad, and if they could not have out more of their friends now Sherry was better.

"Read that," he said, giving her the letter.

She read it, growing white and rigid as she read, and saying in a whisper: "Oh, Alex., Maplehurst is not ours! It is theirs!" and she nodded towards the room where Sherry lay in a sleep which was giving back her strength, while Katy sat beside her.

"Yes, it is Sherry's," Alex. replied, thinking only of her, and feeling the pain grow less because it was Sherry and not a stranger who was to take Maplehurst from him.

"What will you do?" Amy asked, and Alex. replied, "Make reparation, of course."

He had met the wrong and would right it as soon as Sherry was able to be told. It was well for Alex. that Craig Saltus was still there, for in him he found a tower of strength and a safe adviser. Craig had studied law a little and knew what was to be done and how to do it.

"It is hard on you," he said to Alex., after he had heard the story, and Alex. replied: "Yes, but it would be harder if any one but Sherry were the usurper."

Craig looked at him a moment, and then said: "I think I know what you mean. I have guessed it all along and am glad for both of you. Sherry is the finest specimen of sweet young girlhood I ever knew. Too impulsive, perhaps, and fond of adventure, as

was proven by her coming here as she did. I may tell you now that I don't know what I might have done but for my infirmity, which will keep me from ever marrying."

Alex. began to protest, but Craig stopped him. "I know my value in one way, but hold myself too high ever to ask anyone to marry a cripple. If she said yes, it would be for my money. I wish you success."

He walked away and sat down alone for a moment to think of the happiness which was probably in store for Alex. and could never be his.

Then he began to feel how much Sherry had been in his mind since he first met her in Buford,—a merry, sunny-faced girl, no more impressed with him because of his money than with the poorest men of her acquaintance. He had felt shocked to find her at Maplehurst as other than a guest, but her illness had followed so quickly that he had scarcely given anything else a thought, and now this affair of the deed was crowding it entirely from his mind. He had seen Alex.'s growing interest in Sherry, and had said to himself: "She is worthy of him, and I am glad for his sake that she is one of the heirs of Maplehurst." Everything he could do to adjust matters Craig resolved to do, and at once set himself about it so quietly and thoroughly that Alex. left everything in his hands and devoted himself to Sherry, waiting anxiously for the day when it would be safe to tell her.

CHAPTER XIV

RIGHTING THE WRONG

Mrs. Pledger heard the story with ejaculations of surprise and incredulity. That Mr. Marsh could have been guilty of a fraud she would not believe until she read his letter.

"Well, if that don't beat me! Who can we trust, I'd like to know," she said; then, as her loyalty to the dead asserted itself, she continued: "Well, I don't care. He was a good man, and repented and God forgave him, and he is in heaven with Eli, who did a mean trick putting the farm out of his hands. I'm glad for the girls. Have you told Katy?"

He had not, but he did the next day. Katy was of a very different temperament from Sherry and received the news almost as if she had expected it.

"I am glad for Sherry and me," she said, "but sorry for you, who have put so much expense on a place which did not belong to you, and I don't see how we can pay you either, unless you rent the place for summer boarders until you are paid."

Alex. knew her scheme was impracticable, but it was like her sense of justice.

"That can't be," he said. "You would not like to turn Maplehurst into a boarding-house. Sherry would not like it either. How is she to-day?"

"Better, but very weak," was Katy's reply. "She must not be excited in the least the doctor says. You must wait."

And Alex. did wait very impatiently for Sherry's convalescence. It progressed rapidly when once it began, and she was at last well enough to take a drive with him along the regular highway for a mile or two, when he turned into a grassy road leading into the woods, where in a clearing picnics had been held. The tables and seats were still there, and on one of the latter he sat down with Sherry, asking if she were tired from the drive.

"Tired!" she said, with a merry laugh. "No. It is so nice to be out again, to feel that I am getting well, that I could shout for joy; it is so lovely here in the shade, with the sunshine trying to find us through the trees, that I wish it might go on forever."

Her cheeks were flushed, her eyes were shining and there was a ring of gladness in her voice which made Alex. take one of her hands in his and hold it fast while he said, "I am glad you are so happy, and I think I can make you happier. I have brought you here to tell you something which will surprise you."

Was it his love he was going to declare? It seemed like it, and Sherry's whole soul sprang to meet it. During her convalescence she had learned to love the master of Maplehurst, and with her woman's intuition guessed that he loved her. She could flirt with the young men at Buford, and keep half a dozen in her train, each thinking he was the favored one. But with Alex. it was different. She must deal fairly with him, and her eyes were cast down as she asked:

"What do you wish to tell me?"

She expected a declaration of love and was not prepared for the story Alex. told her, making her feel as if her blood were leaving her drop by drop until she was cold as the stones around her. Then she cried,—not a low cry, but loud with sobs, which shook her whole body and made Alex. pass his arm around her, and draw her head down upon his shoulder, where she let it lie. Through all the telling his love for her had shown itself, and it was to that she was responding, rather than to the story she heard of the sudden prosperity which was hers.

When her sobs had ceased Alex. said to her: "Have you nothing to say to this good fortune? Don't you understand that Maplehurst is yours?"

Then she lifted up her head and dashing the tears away turned her bright eyes upon him and said: "I won't have it! I'll never take it from you, never! I give it back,—my share of it, and I'll make Katy give hers,—and you must take it."

Alex. had not intended to speak of the subject uppermost in his mind so soon, but something in Sherry's face wrung it from him, and drawing it closer to him, he said: "I can only do that by taking you with it."

"Take me, then!" was Sherry's prompt answer, as she hid her face in his bosom and began to cry again.

After that it was very easy, and they sat for an hour or more talking of the past when Alex. first saw her at the theatre and again in the Park; of his call

on Mrs. Pledger and learning that her name was Sherry; of the dog named for her, and the share she had in his thoughts until she came to Maplehurst.

"Don't talk about that," Sherry said, with a sound of more tears in her voice. "It was a foolish girl's quixotic idea. I wish I could blot it out."

"I don't," Alex. replied. "I am glad of it, as it brought you to me, who might never have found you, or the letter either, which takes Maplehurst from me and gives me you in return, a priceless payment, for which I can never be sufficiently thankful; and now, Sherry, kiss me in token that you are mine."

Only the birds singing in the trees heard or saw the reply, but Alex. was satisfied, and a great light of pride and joy was in his eyes when on his return to the house he said to his mother and sister: "Congratulate me, Sherry is to be my wife."

They were expecting it, and if in their hearts there was a wish that it was otherwise they did not show it. They would a little rather that Alex.'s wife had never been a waitress, but that could not be helped. The circumstances made a difference. It was a girlish escapade over which they would laugh when they talked of her to their friends. That she would be a leader in any society they knew, and remembering Maplehurst, made up their minds that Alex. had done well, and that in all probability they could come again to this charming spot, which had never seemed so lovely as when they thought it lost. It had been thought desirable to keep the story of the finding of the deed and letter from the household generally until

Sherry knew of it. Now that secrecy was no longer necessary, Mrs. Pledger took it upon herself to carry the news to the employees. She and Katy had heard of the engagement from Alex., and Sherry had been kissed and congratulated and made to lie down, as Mrs. Pledger said she did the first thing after Joel had proposed and left, she was so wobbly in her knees.

"I'm going to tell 'em," she said to Alex., as she heard the clatter of dishes in the servants' dining-room, where they were having their lunch.

Nos. 2 and 3 had gone, as their services were not needed, but Polly was still there and listened open-mouthed until it came to the engagement, when she gave a shout and insisted upon three cheers from her companions, which they gave with a will, bringing Mrs. Groves to the door, asking: "Why this noise? Are you crazy?"

"Yes," Polly answered, "crazy with joy! No. 1 is the owner of Maplehurst. They have found papers in the chest proving it, and she is to marry Mr. Marsh! He proposed this morning. Hurrah!"

Mrs. Groves' chin dropped, but not until she said to Mrs. Pledger: "And so she's got him at last. Perseverance sometimes has its reward."

Mrs. Pledger was angry, and replied: "Reward or not, my niece is worthy of Mr. Marsh, and you know it, and have known it all the time that she was your superior, and that is why you badgered her so much. That is the way of some mean minds. Sherry is now the mistress of Maplehurst, and I don't believe *you* will come here another year. Good-morning!"

She made a mocking curtesy and left Mrs. Groves more discomfited than she had ever been in her life. She had looked forward to several seasons at Maplehurst, with the fine salary she received. But that was now impossible. "New lords, new laws," she said to herself. "I must stand it. I wish I had been a little softer to the girl," and calling to No. 4 reproved her sharply for some trifling omission on the table. Polly, who felt intuitively that Mrs. Groves' day was over, went on humming to herself and took her time to make the required change.

The next day Mrs. Pledger started for New York, enjoining upon Katy and Sherry that they spend a few days with her on their way to Buford. To Alex. she said: "An old woman's advice is not good for much, but I'm going to give it just the same. Don't put off the wedding. Marry as soon as Sherry is well, —say the last of September, and if you will be happier to own Maplehurst with all its jimcracks buy Katy's share. She will sell. I've sounded her. Sherry's is the same as yours now. Have another house party next summer, but don't put that Groves woman at the head. They all hate her like pizen. Put *me* at the head, if you like. I can save you dollars and run things as well as she has."

Alex. laughed and said he would remember her advice, especially with regard to the wedding, which he would like to have at once. As to Maplehurst, it would take some time to settle everything and know what belonged to the Crosby heirs and what to him, but Craig Saltus and a first-class lawyer in New York

were seeing to that. Relieved of care in that direction, Alex.'s good times came back like good measure pressed down and running over, and the world had never been so bright as during the two weeks he stayed at Maplehurst, while Sherry was recovering her strength and growing each day more beautiful, it seemed to him.

Sometimes he drove with her through the lovely country, but oftener sat by her under the maple tree watching the kindling light in her eyes and the dimples coming and going with her blushes, as he told his love over and over again, dating its beginning at the time he saw her at the opera, and its rapid growth when he waltzed with her on the piazza and nearly bumped his head against hers as they bent over the salad plate, and its completion when she turned to him for help against Mrs. Groves' insinuations.

Alex. was very happy, and it was with regret that he at last left Maplehurst to accompany Katy and Sherry to Buford, where Mrs. Sherman received him as her future son-in-law, and the people came flocking in, ostensibly to see Sherry after her illness, but really to see Alex. He had in mind a trip to Europe for the winter, and as he had a dread of the sea he insisted that their marriage should take place before the autumnal storms came on.

"No need for finery. We can get that in Paris," he said, and with his push and breeziness he carried his point, and invitations were issued for the last of September.

It was a large wedding, for all Buford was invited,

with many of Alex.'s acquaintances from New York. Among the guests were Nos. 2, 3 and 4,—"treated just as good as anybody," Polly said, when discussing the affair with her friends. "Say," she whispered to Sherry, when presented to her by an usher, "say, be you going to Maplehurst next summer?"

"Perhaps," Sherry answered, and Polly continued, "Well, remember *me,* will you, and let me wait on your table; but for pity's sake don't have that old cat Groves there! If you do, excuse me!"

She curtesied and passed on to make room for others. Mrs. Groves had not been included in the list of guests, and she gnashed her teeth when she heard of the grand wedding and who were there."

"Evidently my connection with the Marshes is ended," she said, "and I working like a slave to please them! I call that the basest ingratitude, and all on account of that girl who made me so mad with her chin in the air and her way of looking at me."

The next day Mrs. Groves advertised for a position as housekeeper in some hotel, or as a chaperone to a party of young ladies during the next summer.

The winter which followed the wedding was passed mostly in Italy. April and May were given to Paris and Switzerland, and one day in June the Buford *Gazette* announced the return of Mr. and Mrs. Alexander Marsh, who were to reopen their country house at Maplehurst and entertain a large house party. All the necessary steps had been taken with regard to the place. Alex. had paid Mrs. Sherman and Katy the money left by Amos Marsh in banks and stocks,—a

sum sufficient to insure their independence the rest of their lives. The wrong had been righted. Maplehurst was virtually his, Sherry was his, and he was steeped in times so good that he occasionally trembled lest the cup he was drinking should be dashed from his thirsting lips. Sherry would prefer a more quiet life than Alex. who is the happiest when a great many people around him are having a good time as well as himself. And he had it last summer. Maplehurst was full, and Sherry as the mistress was the star around which everyone revolved. The Marshes were there, and Sherry's mother and Katy and Mrs. Pledger. Nos. 2 and 3 were missing. One was married, and one slept under the flowers in Mount Auburn, but Polly was there and was advanced to Mrs. Groves' place, which she filled admirably and satisfactorily to all parties. The dog was there, too, and Alex. tried to change his name back to Laddie, but couldn't.

"One Sherry is enough for me," he said, but the dog was obstinate, paying no attention when called by the old name.

He was Sherry, and whenever he heard the name, whether addressed to him or to his mistress, he pricked up his ears and started for the stick he expected thrown for his diversion.

As I write the last page of this story a fierce blizzard is sweeping over the hills and mountains of New Hampshire and the highways are blocked with snow. Alex. and Sherry are in Florida, but invitations are already out for a large house party in July, when

there will again be sounds of revelry by day and night at Maplehurst, which is now cold and silent in the grip of midwinter, with no sign of life except when Bowles goes up to see that all is safe.

THE END.

CONNIE'S MISTAKE

Connie's Mistake

CHAPTER I

THE 4 CORNERS

THOSE who have lived on the mountain roads between Springfield and Albany, have heard of THE 4 CORNERS, famous for the sign-post with its white lettering on a black background, the figure "4" large and conspicuous in the centre, instead of the word itself. Why it was painted thus no one knows. It has been there since the oldest inhabitant can remember, and when a high wind blew the post down and broke it another was put in its place and the old board retained. It is a reminder of past glories, and gives the Corners a kind of distinction, the people think, and they are very proud of their figure "4" and the sign-post, although few come there now inquiring the way to Albany, or other towns whose names are upon the board. Should you wish to visit "The 4 Corners" on a summer morning, take a Boston and Albany train for the way station, Millville, a town hemmed in by hills which look like mountains, and mountains which seem no higher than the hills. There is no daily public conveyance there now for The Corners two miles away, for the glory of the

place was crushed beneath the wheels of the first locomotive which climbed the steep grade of the mountains and consigned stage coaches and the goodly cheer of the wayside inns to oblivion. Very few except those who live in the vicinity of The 4 Corners visit it, but sometimes you will find behind the station an old sorrel horse and a buggy, the latter with its square box seat telling of many years of service, and the former, the horse, sleek and fat and lazy, and untrammeled by check rein of any kind, seemingly asleep and paying no heed to the rush and roar and smoke of the train as it dashes by. But in his younger days, when he first saw and heard it, he started off at break-neck speed towards his home, which he reached with a broken thill and three wheels, the fourth having been left by the big gate as he entered the yard. Possibly Dr. Stannard may be there with one or the other of his horses, Pro and Con, named to suit a fancy of his. Failing old Sorrel and Pro and Con, there is a livery stable across the broad common where a conveyance can be had, and within fifteen minutes after you signify your wish to go to The 4 Corners, you will be driving along a road as smooth as an asphalt pavement, unless the wheels of your vehicle run into a rut full of stones washed down from the hills or up from the earth by some heavy fall of rain.

It is one of the pleasantest bits of road in all that section of country, winding up and up, with level stretches like plateaus between the ascents, and with delightful views of wooded hills, green in their summer dress, and mountains, purple with the haze which

rests upon them when in the valley below the air is quivering with the heat of July and August. To your right you get glimpses of a pond where the white lilies grow in abundance, and whose waters help to turn the machinery of the manufacturing town at the foot of the hill. It is not a large place, but with its white houses and green blinds it makes a pretty picture, and you keep looking back at it as you bowl along the smooth road between hedges of blackberry bushes and low alders and red sumachs. Suddenly, at a turn in the road and a rise steeper than any before it, you reach a level plain, which seems to stretch away mile upon mile in every direction, and you look off upon farmhouses dotting the landscape, some red, some white and more brown and weather beaten. The doors and windows are flung open wide to admit the sunshine and the air, and the inmates are busy, some in the fields, some indoors, while others, in the early morning, when the whistle blew in the valley below, took their tin pails and hurried away to the great factory, whose chimney and roof and upper windows can be seen from the plateau.

"This is The 4 Corners. Where will you get out and shall I wait for you?" Jehu asks, and as your errand is not to any particular place, you tell him to put you down by the steps of the little church, the first building you come to. "Fifty cents," he says, when you ask his price, and you pay it with alacrity and think it cheap when you remember the hills you have come up and look at the moist state of the horse, panting under the elm tree, with his head low down.

"Allus in a chronic tucker," Jehu says, when you call his attention to the animal, and suggest that he must at some time have been overworked or he would not tire so easily. "Mebby so. Bought him of a pedlar," he says. "But now he's in clover. It's the marster's religion to be good to hosses. I b'lieve he'll go ridin' into Heaven behind the finest span on the road. None of your yanked up heads, with straight checks and cut-off tails for him. No, marm. He says the Lord made a hosses' tail like a woman's hair, for ornament, and to brush off the flies, and if a hoss wants to see what is goin' on behind him he's goin' to let him have a chance to see. Henriet ain't abused. She's had nervous prostration and is kep' for short runs, that's all," and with his shirt sleeve he wipes the white drops from the neck of the horse, who rubs against him with a little whinney which no horse gives except he is well cared for and content.

You say you will walk back to the station, and when Jehu and Henriet disappear you seat yourself upon the steps of the church and begin to look about you, wondering if this is not the place in which to lay the first scene in the story you are going to write. The church seems very old, and looking over the door you see the date 1820, and begin to speculate upon the number of people who have gone in and out and worshipped inside its walls since its doors were thrown open to the public. There is a graveyard behind it, and you know that many of the worshippers are sleeping there, for the yard is full and the road leading into it is grass-grown like a lawn, showing

that few wheels enter there now. There is a little red schoolhouse not far away, and near the schoolhouse is a small building, which serves the treble purpose of a dry-goods store, grocery and post-office, but there are no customers at this hour of the day, and there will not be many until afternoon, when Jehu and Henriet bring up the mail, then the proprietor will for a time be very busy, and sugar and tea and tobacco will be given out with the evening papers and the few letters which find their way to that office. From where you sit you can see the broad roads which cross each other at right angles and make The 4 Corners, one going north and south and the others continuing on towards Albany in one direction and towards Boston in another. This last was the great thoroughfare over which the stages came from the east and the west, before the limited express or fast mail or engine of any kind thundered through the peaceful country, bringing the mountaineers rather unwillingly into closer proximity with the outer world. When the surveyors first appeared in the vicinity of The 4 Corners, there was a council of war among the inhabitants. They didn't want a railroad cutting up their farms and gardens and ruining Stannard's Inn, which was famed as the best kept house in the State. But the railroad came two miles from Stannard's Inn, which gradually became a thing of the past. The stage coaches came no more, for the cars carried the people where they wished to go and "The 4 Corners were nowhere," the boy Ephraim Stannard said, as he saw the last stage that would

ever stop at his father's door roll down the hill, the driver blowing a farewell blast on the bugle with which he was wont to announce his approach.

A few changes were made, and then what had been Stannard's Inn was transformed into the comfortable farm-house which you see to your right in the south-east angle of The 4 Corners as you sit on the steps of the church. It is very large, with a wide hall in the centre and a big fire-place at the end, the glory and pride of the family, who would almost as soon part with an arm or foot as have the great chimney removed, with its fire-places in so many rooms and its link with the olden time before stoves were in fashion or furnaces had been thought of. It was built by a Stannard some years before the church, and has been owned by the Stannards ever since. They are a thrifty race, and the Stannard farm is the finest in the neighborhood. Ephraim Stannard, the boy who watched with a swelling heart the last stage roll away is the owner, and a deacon in the church on whose steps you are sitting while you inspect The 4 Corners and the house which was once Stannard's Inn.

Diagonally across the corner on the northwest angle is another and far more pretentious house, with gables and a bay window and a conservatory and a terraced garden down the hill behind it. This was once the Morris place, and Mrs. Morris and Mrs. Stannard were sisters, and both came, in their young womanhood, as brides to The 4 Corners, one as the wife of plain, honest-hearted Ephraim Stannard, a farmer, the other the wife of reckless, good-for-nothing

Charles Morris, who broke her heart in two years and buried her in the yard behind the church and raised a tall monument to her memory, ran a wild career for a time and then died suddenly, leaving his only son, Charles Harold, to the care of his aunt, Mrs. Ephraim Stannard. For a while the Morris house was rented, but as time passed on and the village around the station grew in importance, few, who could afford to pay the rent, cared to live at The 4 Corners, and it was at last untenanted, while the decay of time crept over it until it would cost more to repair it than Ephraim Stannard, who had it in charge, felt warranted in putting upon it. The repairs, however, were made later on with a lavish hand, and you wonder that so much money should have been expended upon the place, and who the owners are. The windows and blinds are open, and a turbaned negress is sweeping the piazza. Otherwise you see no sign of life, and you hear later that the family are at the sea-shore. Around the farmhouse everything is quiet, except the motherly hen clucking to her brood of chickens and wandering unmolested through the yard. It seems a lonely place, but the view is so fine in every direction, the air so pure and the sky so blue, that you decide at last that no better spot can be found for the first scene of your story, which is to open years prior to the July morning when Henriet and Jehu took you up the old stage hill to The 4 Corners.

CHAPTER II

KENNETH AND HARRY

From the day when Mrs. Stannard took home her sister's little boy, Charles Harold, or Harry, as he was usually called, she gave him a mother's care equally with her own son, Kenneth, who was nearly the same age as his cousin, but as unlike him as one boy can be unlike another. "He is his father all over and can't help it," Mrs. Stannard would say, as an excuse for Harry's faults, which, without his father, she would have condoned for the sake of his mother and because of his handsome face and affectionate, winning ways. At a very early age he began to assume an air of superiority over his associates, because of the money left him by his father, who, he said, was a gentleman and not a farmer, and came of a family which never had to work. And Harry wouldn't work. Why should he? he said, when his board was paid and he was not beholden in any way to the uncle and aunt who cared for him. They could charge what they liked, he didn't care. He should still have quite a fortune when he was twenty-one, after which he intended to travel and see the world and have a good time generally.

He had a pretty good time as a boy, Kenneth thought, when he stayed in bed till breakfast was

ready on cold winter mornings, while he, Kenneth, was up before light, helping his father with the fires and chores, and sometimes hanging out the Monday's washing for his mother, when the wind was so sharp as to penetrate through her mittens and the thick hood upon her head. Kenneth was decidedly a mother's boy, an unselfish, helpful boy, doing for every one whatever his hands found to do, and never dreaming that any necessary labor was beneath him. Every dumb beast on the place, from Sorrel, the horse, and the big rooster who ruled the hen-yard, down to the lambs feeding in the sheep pasture, knew him and came at his call as readily as the watch dog, Chance, or the house cat, Fan, with her family of six kittens just opening their eyes, and six more gambolling about the premises and getting their daily rations from the trough Kenneth had scooped out from a log, and into which, morning and night, he always poured a part of old Limeback's milk. She was the cow set apart for the cats, and Kenneth saw that they had their rights religiously, and bore meekly Harry's jeers at what he called Ken's soft-heartedness for dogs and cats and animals generally. Sometime he meant to have a blooded horse and put him on the race-course with large bets behind him, but as for farm animals, they were like country people, and he hated them, and the only serious quarrel he and Kenneth ever had was when he tied two kittens together by their hind legs and then set a rat terrier belonging to a neighbor to worry them. The dog was dealt a blow with a hoe which sent him yelping home, the little

cats were untied, and then Harry had a thrashing such as he never forgot. His lip was cut and swollen, his eyes black for a week, but he bore no malice against Kenneth for the castigation. On the contrary, he rather respected him for it.

"Upon my word, I didn't s'pose you had so much grit, or could strike so hard; there's some strength in your big, rough hands. I b'lieve you'll be a prize fighter yet," he said good-naturedly, when Kenneth tried to apologize, saying he must have hit harder than he meant to, he was so mad. "Never mind, Ken, I deserved to have my eyes and teeth knocked out. I'm a kind of blackguard anyway," he added, while the two boys shook hands, and Harry never again tried the experiment of tieing cats together and setting the dog upon them.

He was a very handsome boy, with soft dark eyes and a winsome smile and white hands, which never did any harder work than to run the mower over the lawn, tie up a rose bush or shell peas for his aunt when she was in a hurry. For the rest of the time, when not in school, he read novels mostly, or books of travel and adventure. He had a boat on the pond which he named "Ken" for his cousin, who rarely found time to go out in it, so busy was he with the many duties devolving upon him as a farmer's son.

Kenneth liked books for the books' sake, and unlike Harry, was always glad when school commenced and sorry when it ended. Some day he meant to go to the Academy in Millville, and perhaps to the dancing-school opened there every winter, and learn some

of the manners which were natural to Harry; then, if he worked hard and saved a great deal, he might possibly go to college, and afterwards study medicine with Dr. Catherin, the famous physician at Rocky Point. It surely must be a grand thing to alleviate pain, only he could never bear to lose a patient and witness the grief of friends. That would be dreadful and unnerve him for days, he thought. Kenneth was very sympathetic, and showed it in every act. Weak as water, Harry said, and laughed when he cried because old blind Roan, who had been in the family for years, broke his legs and had to be shot. He did not look very weak with his broad shoulders and chest and sinewy arms, which could handle Harry as if he were a child.

"Wait till I have been through all the athletic sports in college; then see if I can't lick you," Harry said, when a boy of fifteen, he was about to start for Andover, where he was to begin his preparatory course for college and the sports which would enable him to *lick* his cousin, Kenneth.

His fortune was sufficient to give him Andover and college, for neither of which he cared a straw except as they might advance him in the career he had marked out for himself in the future.

"No more rough farming for me," he said, on the morning when he was leaving for Andover, forgetting that he had never so much as hoed a row of potatoes or weeded a garden bed, let alone what he called rough farming. "I am going to have a good time after I am through college, and perhaps shall fix up the old

house and spend a few weeks there in the summer with some high bloods, whose acquaintance I shall make. That will be a tony thing to do. Or, I may bring a wife there for the summer,—a rich one, if I have any; none of your poor country girls for me. I leave them to you. Maybe I shall fancy that Connie, What's-her-name?—your father's ward, you know. How much do you s'pose she's worth?"

He was sitting on the kitchen table, swinging his legs back and forth and watching Kenneth strapping his trunk by the door, and paying very little attention to him until Connie What's-her-name was mentioned. Then Kenneth looked up quickly, and said: "Do you mean Connie Elliott? Why, she's only a little girl, five or six years old, and you are nearly fifteen."

"Phoo! Nine years' difference is nothing if you fancy the girl and she has the ready," Harry replied. "Father was ten years older than mother. It's the thing to do. But, halloo, there's Sorrel and the buggy. I s'pose it's time to go. Good-by, Ken. You are a good sort of fellow after all, and I shall miss you awfully. Good-by, Aunt Mary. You have always been nice to me. I'm sorry I have not been a better boy, more like Ken. Good-by."

There were tears in his dark eyes as he kissed his Aunt Mary and shook hands with Kenneth, both of whom, under the spell he cast over them, would have forgiven far more than they had to forgive in the handsome boy, who, as long as they could see him, stood up in the buggy and waved his hat and hands to them as they stood watching him in the door, and

thinking, not of his faults, but how lonely they should be without him. In Kenneth's heart there was no feeling of envy. It had always seemed right that the good things should come to Harry and the bad things, if there were any, should come to himself. This arose partly from his unselfishness, and partly because Harry claimed everything as his right. Kenneth would have liked Andover, but as it did not seem within his reach, he was content with the Millville Academy, where he soon became the most popular boy, as well as the first in his class. At the dancing-school, which he attended every Saturday afternoon, he did not succeed quite as well. His movements were a little clumsy, but he learned many things which he had heard Harry say were essential to the manners of a gentleman, and felt himself quite accomplished, though of course not equal to Hal, who always seemed to know the right thing to say and do.

At first there were a few homesick letters from Hal, as he began to find his level and didn't like it.

"Andover is not what it is cracked up to be," he wrote to Kenneth. "Some of the fellows don't know a gentleman when they see him. Think of their trying to make me a fag. Not much! I wish you were here to whale 'em."

After a few weeks the letters were more cheerful in tone. The boys had found out that he was somebody, and he had made the acquaintance of a real nice chap,—rich, too. He laid great stress on *rich,* as if that were the main thing in favor of Tom

Haynes, who lived in Kentucky near where Harry's father was born.

"He has heard of the Morrises, and knows they are a tip-top family," he wrote. "A little fast, maybe, as one of them once ran a bowie knife into somebody who called him a liar. But that's nothing. That shows grit, Tom says, and he knows. We have a long vacation at Christmas and New Year's, nearly two weeks, and Tom has hinted pretty broadly that he'd like to spend it with me at The 4 Corners. You see, I've done some tall bragging about *my house,* the Morris Place, and have spoken of Aunt Mary as the housekeeper, and so on. You know the blacks south are all uncles and aunts, and somehow Tom has got it into his head that Aunt Mary and Uncle Ephraim came from Kentucky with my father, and are like,—well, like his Aunt Dinah and Uncle Sam he talks so much about. I never meant him to think so, for I am not quite a cad; but when I saw that he had the idea, and that because of it he thought more of me and stood for me against the wretches who were going to toss me in a blanket I couldn't tell him. How could I? He'd like to see the Morris Place, and says he'd have such fine times with sleigh rides and skating and eating Aunt Mary's *pones.* I wonder what they are! I told him she made No. 1 fried cakes, but I never said a word about *pones!* He has a colored boy at home, who comes into his room every cold morning and makes a fire before he is up, and brushes his clothes and blacks his shoes. My eye!

What would he think of that blizzardy north chamber, where we sleep and nearly shake the teeth out of our heads with the cold, as we dress and hurry downstairs to wash in a tin basin and wipe on a roller-towel! No, sir! I could not have him at the farmhouse, and so I had to make up some yarn about Aunt Mary's having the rheumatism and Uncle Ephraim the gout, and nobody to do anything but a boy, Kenneth! And I honestly believe he thinks you black with the rest, although I never hinted such a thing. Why, you are as white as the driven snow compared to me, a liar and blackguard. But what was there left for me but to lie, and I can do that easy, you know,—that is, I can blarney a fellow till he don't know whether he is himself or someone else. I blarneyed Tom till he wrote to his mother, who has invited me to spend the holidays at Cedar Bank, and I have accepted. Won't it be jolly? And, by the way, I wish Uncle Ephraim would add a little to my allowance. Tom thinks me a kind of millionaire, and it won't do to go empty-handed. I'd like to see you all, of course, but you will keep, and the invitation to Cedar Bank won't. Give my love to Aunt Mary and kiss her for me, and Uncle Ephraim, too, if he will let you. Give old Chance a pat on the head. I think a good deal of him as a dog. Tom knows about him and the dozen cats,—I think I said two dozens,—who eat out of the trough. He wants to see them awfully. He is nearly as great on cats as you are.

"Very lovingly, your cousin,

"HAL."

Kenneth read this letter twice, with a swelling in his heart as if it would burst. For himself he did not care, but he did not like to have his father and mother mistaken for darkies. It was humiliating, and it hurt him. He didn't like the way Harry spoke of the house, as if he were ashamed of it, but more than all he was disappointed. He had anticipated Harry's coming home, and wanted to show him his standing in the Millville Academy, and to compare notes as to which knew the most of Latin, and to show off his dancing steps and bows, and possibly get Hal to coach him a little, he was so well posted on such matters. Then there were so many things to make Harry's home coming pleasant. Quantities of walnuts and butternuts and chestnuts, which he had gathered during the autumn, when he had a leisure hour, were ranged in rows on the ball-room floor. The finest clusters of grapes had been wrapped in paper bags, and put away where they would not freeze, for Harry was fond of grapes, and apples, too, and the largest and best of Baldwins and Kings were on the top of the barrels in the cellar ready for him, while over and above all was the present Kenneth had bought for him with money saved from his own rather scanty allowance, a pearl-handled pocket knife with three blades, for which he had given a dollar. There were the soft wool mittens his mother had knit and the skates his father had bought, all waiting for Hal, who was not coming to claim them, and whose friend, Tom Haynes, thought them all negroes and the Morris Place a palace! It was hard, and Kenneth swallowed

and winked a good many times before he could force back the tears from his eyes and the lump from his throat.

"Hal does not care for us; he thinks we are dirt, and is ashamed to bring his fine friend here," he said, as he handed the letter to his mother, who was scarcely less hurt and disappointed. "Yes, he's ashamed of us," Kenneth repeated to himself that night, as he went up to the *blizzardy* north room, which never seemed to him quite so cold as it did now in the light of Harry's criticism. "'Tis cheerless, that's a fact," Kenneth thought, as the wind went screaming past the house, driving before it a cloud of snow, some of which sifted in upon the bare floor through the shaky window. "Yes, 'tis cheerless and cold, and after all I don't much blame Hal for wanting to go where a nigger makes a fire in the morning before he is up, but, by golly! he needn't let 'em think father and mother are nigger aunties and uncles, and if I live I'll show him somebody he nor forty Tom Hayneses won't be ashamed of! Yes, I will!"

The last words were said sleepily, for Kenneth's head was on the pillow, and his last glimmer of consciousness was that he was to make something of himself of which his cousin would not be ashamed.

CHAPTER III

EXPECTING CONNIE

When Deacon Stannard was in the army, the colonel of his regiment was Mark Elliott, whom, at the battle of Gettysburg, he found lying on his face among the dead and dying. At the risk of his own life he took him to a place of safety, and stayed by him till consciousness returned and he was able to be removed to a greater distance from the field of carnage. This act the colonel never forgot, and he became Ephraim's fast friend, corresponding with him and visiting him once or twice at The 4 Corners. Then both men married and their lives drifted apart. The city man was busy on Wall Street, in New York, and Ephraim was busy on the farm which had come to him at his father's death. Years went by and they heard nothing of each other, until there came to Ephraim, who was now a deacon, a letter from his friend, written in St. Augustine, where he had gone for his health.

"Florida cannot help me, and I am dying," he wrote. "I shall never go back again. Since the death of my wife, two years ago, I have had no wish to live except for my little girl, Constance. She is in New York with my sister Mrs. Hart, who is a widow with no children, and would like to take charge of

her. She is a good woman and will be kind to Connie, but she thinks a great deal of society and is rather extravagant in her tastes. I'd like you to be joint guardian with Mrs. Hart of my child. I shall leave her some money, and I wish you to see to it. I can trust you, and know that anything placed in your hands will be safe. If you think my present investments are not good, and some of them are shaky, make others to suit you. I shall instruct my sister to take Connie to the farmhouse on a visit, and if the child likes the country better than the city, she is to stay with you as much as you care to have her. I want her to be brought up a good and sensible woman rather than a fashionable one. She will be beautiful, like her mother. She will be sought after, and God only knows what her future will be. I wish I could see you once more. A sight of your honest face would do me good, and I could talk to you of Connie and the money. I scarcely dare hope it, but if you can come, every expense will be paid. I am too tired to write more. My hands shake and there is a sound in my ears like the distant noise of the battles we fought together. Well, they are over now, and the battle of life is nearly ended.

"Good-by,

"Mark Elliott."

Deacon Stannard received this letter in January, and two days later he was on his way to St. Augustine, which he reached the day before the colonel's death, and in time to hear his verbal instructions with re-

gard to Connie and the money left to her. As there was no one else to do it, he went with the body to New York, and saw Connie, and offered to take her home with him at once, if she wished to go.

But Mrs. Hart said: "No, she belongs to me rather than to you, to whom, according to my brother's wishes, I must look for money when she needs it. I have promised to bring her to your house, and shall do so, but naturally her place is with me."

Evidently she did not like being made joint guardian with this plain country farmer. "He is such a codger," she said before Connie, who opened wide her great blue eyes and asked: "What is a codger?"

Her aunt did not reply. She was wondering if the deacon would stay after the funeral, and how she could keep him in the background if he did. In his honest soul he felt that perhaps he ought to stay a few days and see to things and chirk her up a bit, he said, when apologizing for not doing so, and saying that he "s'posed Mary and the boys wanted him at home."

There was a proud toss of the lady's head as she thanked him and said he was very kind, but there was no need for him to stay on her account, as she had friends and was accustomed to manage her own affairs.

"Well, I guess then I'll go to-night," the deacon said, with a faint glimmering that "his room was better than his company," and bidding the lady good-by, he started for The 4 Corners, which he reached two weeks after he left them.

It was like a journey round the world, that trip to St. Augustine and New York, and he talked of it for days, his voice trembling as he spoke of Colonel Elliott, and his manner becoming eloquent when he told them of Connie and described Mrs. Hart's beautiful home and the number of servants employed.

"I didn't s'pose anybody but the Queen lived that way; did you, Hal?" Kenneth said.

"Pshaw! yes. That's nothing, and it's the way I mean to live some time," Harry answered, with the air of superior knowledge which always made Kenneth feel small and ignorant.

On one point they were agreed, and that was Connie, the little girl who was soon coming to visit them. Mrs. Stannard hoped she would stay a long time, and in her mind were visions of the little room next her own and the little bed she would fit up for her, while Kenneth thought of the sled he had seen in Millville and on which he would take her up and down the long hill and out upon the pond and everywhere. Harry thought of nothing except that it would be rather nice to have a little girl in the house, especially as she belonged to a swell family and had money. He was always thinking of money and swell people, and boasting of the Morrises, who belonged to that class. "Bred in his bone; takes it from his father, the proudest man I ever saw," was Mrs. Stannard's explanation, when her husband wondered where Hal got such notions.

For a time he was quite interested in Connie and her expected visit with her aunt. "Mrs. Hart can't

fail to see that I am a kick above the rest of 'em here, and I shall tell her who father was," he thought, while Kenneth was planning how he could make it pleasant for the little girl.

It was decided at last that she was not to come that winter, and Kenneth, who had bought the sled at a reduced rate, put it away in the garret and began to plan for the summer, when the country would be so pleasant and the pond lilies so thick, and Hal would take her out in his boat and he would make her a swing in the barn and a *teater* in the fence.

The summer went by and autumn came and Hal went away to Andover and Kenneth to Millville, and Connie did not come, and they had ceased to expect her until a wild day in December, when a western blizzard was careering over the hills. Kenneth, who had been to the office, brought home a letter from Mrs. Hart, saying that, if convenient, she would spend the holidays at the farmhouse. She did not add that she had recently met with some losses, and had given up a trip to the south which she had intended taking, and as the visit to The 4 Corners must be made, she had decided to have it off her mind. That Connie should wish to stay in the country any length of time was preposterous, nor was it at all desirable for herself that she should. She was fond of the child and meant to keep her with her. She had promised her brother to take her to the farmhouse and let her see country life, and she must keep her promise, but would do it in her own way. None knew better than herself the beauties of the country in summer. She

could see the fresh green grass and foliage and smell the new-mown hay and the lilies in the pond and the roses in the garden, and hear the hum of happy insect life, and knew these things would appeal to Connie, who might insist upon staying longer than she cared to have her, for if Connie stayed she must stay, too, and see that she did not contract habits hard to be rid of. So she decided to go in the winter, guessing what accommodations she would find, and knowing what the cold would be up there in the hills. She would not take her maid, who would be out of place. Connie must wait upon herself, and if she found it a hardship all the better, as she would sooner tire of the country and never care to visit it again.

Connie was delighted with the prospect of seeing her *Guardy,* as she called Deacon Stannard, and talked of the trip constantly.

"You will find things quaint and old-fashioned," her aunt said to her, "but you must be very nice, no matter what you see. Deacon Stannard manages your money, and if you are not nice it may be harder to get all you want. And don't you tell that I gave twenty-five dollars for your doll-house. He is something of a hunks, and would not like it."

Connie nodded her little wise head, wiser in some respects than her aunt suspected. She was wondering what the old-fashioned things were she was to see, and what *quaint* and *hunks* meant. She liked to know the meaning of things, and hunted for the words in a dictionary. She missed *hunks,* but found *quaint,* the multiplicity of whose definitions bewildered her.

She fixed, however, upon two, *odd* and *antique*. She knew what the latter meant. Her aunt had a craze for antiques, and gave a great price for them. Perhaps she could buy some at the farmhouse out of her pocket money, and give her aunt for a Christmas present. Hers, bought in advance, was the doll-house, for which twenty-five dollars had been paid. She was rather sorry to leave it, but a trip in the cars was always delightful to her, and it was a very happy child who, on the day before Christmas, started for The 4 Corners.

Meantime, at the farmhouse there had been a good deal of excitement on the receipt of Mrs. Hart's letter.

"What shall we do with 'em if it stays as cold as it is now, and nothing but a fireplace in the best room and guest chamber? They'll freeze to death. I wish they had come in the summer," Mrs. Stannard said, while Kenneth took a more hopeful view of the situation.

He would much rather they had come in the summer, but would make the best of it and try to keep them warm, he said. If there was any work Kenneth hated it was splitting wood. Now, however, he put aside his dislike, and, remembering how cold the parlor and guest chamber were, he employed his leisure time when out of school in sawing and splitting wood, until his mother said he had enough "to roast an ox." There were two piles, the parlor pile and the upstairs pile, the latter finer and of a kind which would kindle quickly.

"If Mrs. Hart doesn't mind I shall creep into her

room before she is wake and make a roaring fire. That's the way Tom Haynes' niggers do, and he thinks we are niggers," Kenneth said to his mother, with some bitterness in his tone, for Harry's letter rankled a little.

And still he wished his cousin was coming home to see Connie. But Harry was off for Kentucky, and did not know of Connie's expected visit until it was too late to change his plan, if he had cared to do so. There were only a few days between Mrs. Hart's letter and the day before Christmas, when she was expected, but in that time the house was put in perfect order, although where the disorder before was the deacon could not guess. But his wife knew, and went through a regular cleaning process, even to the big ball-room over the stable, which she swept and mopped and dusted, looking askance at the piles of butternuts and walnuts on the floor and wondering what Mrs. Hart would think of such litter should she chance to go in there. Fires were built in the parlor and guest chamber, with a view to thaw them out, when, fortunately, the weather changed, and the day before Christmas was ushered in with a warm rain, which threatened to take away all the snow. It cleared, however, in the afternoon, and Kenneth was at the station when the New York train came in, and a tall lady in black alighted, with a little girl, in blue cloak and hood trimmed with swan's down, her lovely face looking out from the hood, and her blue eyes laughing up at Kenneth as he took her

in his arms, while Mrs. Hart picked her way through the melting snow and slush.

"This is awful. Couldn't you have gotten nearer the track?" she said, rather crossly, to Kenneth, as she looked down at her boots covered with mud.

"Perhaps I could, but Sorrel is young and don't like the engine very well. I'm awfully sorry," Kenneth replied, helping her into the sleigh and taking his seat beside her, with Connie in the middle.

CHAPTER IV

CONNIE

As they drove up the hill, Connie's bright eyes studied Kenneth curiously, and as she usually said what was in her mind, she finally asked:

"Boy, who are you? One of Guard's grooms?"

"Hush-sh!" came from her aunt, while Kenneth felt a twinge similar to that he had experienced when he read Hal's letter about the darkies.

That was bad enough, but this was worse. He laughed, however, and answered:

"I am Kenneth Stannard, your guardian's son."

"Oh-h!" Connie said, pursing up her little mouth and moving forward so as to look at him more closely. "I'm so glad. I like boys ever so much."

Leaning back, she nestled closer to him, and rubbed her blue hood against his shoulder in a caressing kind of way, which sent the blood tingling through his veins and made him forget the groom.

"Will we have a Christmas-tree to-night, with tapers?" she asked, as they passed a clump of pines near the top of the hill.

Kenneth looked distressed. Anything like a Christmas-tree had never come into his experience. He had heard of them at St. Jude's at Rocky Point,

but had never seen any one or knew that they had them in a private house.

"I am afraid not," he answered. "We don't have such things here; but if the snow does not all melt off, we'll slide down hill to-morrow."

To Connie, who had never slidden down hill, the prospect of doing so atoned for the absence of a Christmas-tree.

"That will be jolly. I wish it was to-morrow," she said, just as they stopped before the farmhouse.

The short wintry day was closing now, with a prospect of more rain, and the lamps were lighted, and a bright fire was blazing in the parlor, to which Mrs. Stannard conducted her guests after kissing the rosy face under the blue hood. As she wore a big white apron and had a speck of flour on her sleeve, which she had failed to see, Connie mistook her for the cook, and the moment she was alone with her aunt she said:

"I wish we had that nice cook instead of old Thorn, who is so cross,—don't you?"

"Hush-sh!" came a second time from Mrs. Hart. "There are no cooks here, nor grooms, nor maids. They all wait upon themselves."

"That's funny," Connie replied. "Who is going to undress and dress me, and hear me say my prayers, I'd like to know? You might have brought Jean. Why didn't you?"

Never in her life had Connie dressed or undressed herself, or said her prayers alone. Mrs. Hart, who meant to bring Connie up religiously, so far at least

as ceremony was concerned, was too indolent to do anything which she could put upon another, and had given strict orders to Jean, the maid, that Connie must say her prayers every night, together with the collect for the day. Jean had performed her duty conscientiously, and had enjoined upon the little girl that to omit her prayers or the collect would be a sin. To dress and undress herself Connie did not mind so much, but to have some one keep her going when she said her prayers seemed a part of the prayer itself, and she looked rather sober till they were in their sleeping-room, to which Mrs. Hart asked to be shown. Here she became interested at once in the furniture and the high bed, wondering how she was to get into it. But what pleased her most was the fire, which went roaring up the chimney, sending out great waves of warmth into the big room.

"Oh, why don't we have a fire like this? It's so nice," Connie said, sitting down upon the hearth and holding her hands to the blaze.

Mrs. Hart did not answer, for just then Kenneth came to say that supper was ready, and they were soon seated at the beautifully spread table, where Connie, who was hungry, forgot to ask questions and gave herself wholly to her supper, stopping occasionally to give a loving squeeze to the kitten she had captured, and which lay in her lap purring its content. Kenneth had told her of the dozen more cats, besides a litter of young kittens, in the barn, and the moment supper was over she asked to go and see them. But her aunt interposed. It was too late and

too cold; the cats would keep till to-morrow, and she bade Connie come with her to the parlor and be quiet.

The first evening was rather dull for all the party except Connie, whom Kenneth taught how to play cat's cradle, and told her the names of the felines she was to see in the morning. The deacon nodded over his paper, while Mrs. Stannard exchanged her white apron for a black silk one and then knit assiduously on a sock which she said was for Harry, who was at school at Andover, but spending his vacation with a friend in Kentucky.

"I didn't know you had another son," Mrs. Hart said, and then Mrs. Stannard told of her sister and Harry's mother lying in the graveyard, and of his father lying in the Morris vault, somewhere in Kentucky.

Very little was said of him, but the Morris family was dwelt upon at large as something to be proud of. Mrs. Hart thought she had heard of them, and said she had met a Mrs. Haynes, from Lexington, Ky., presumably the family Harry was visiting, and she found her respect rising a little for the Stannards, who were in a way connected with the Morrises, and whose nephew was a student in Andover and a guest at the Hayneses. At eight o'clock she told Connie it was time for her to go to bed, adding, "I'll go with you, if you are afraid."

But fear was no part of Connie's nature. She rather liked the idea of going alone; it made her feel more womanly. She did not, however, decline Kenneth's escort up the stairs and through the hall, but

insisted upon carrying the candle he lighted, and held it at such an angle that several drops of tallow fell on her dress and on the floor before she reached the door of her room.

"Good-night, Connie. I suppose there is nothing I can do for you?" Kenneth said.

"No, thanks," Connie replied; then, still holding her dripping candle nearly upside down, she added: "Or, yes, if you will hear me say my prayers and keep me going."

Kenneth drew a long breath and stopped short, while she continued: "And if you will just unbutton me. I can't reach 'em very well and hold the candle, too, and the kitten. I've got it, see?"

She was squeezing it under her arm, while she put her hand to the back of her dress, trying to loosen the refractory buttons.

Kenneth's face was scarlet, but the one turned to him was innocent as a baby's, and he began his task. He did not know anything about a child's buttons, and his fingers felt like thumbs as he managed to undo them, while Connie hunched her shoulders and squeezed the cat, which she said she should keep all night if her aunt would let her.

"I always have a doll at home," she said, "and I wanted to bring one with me, but auntie would not let me. I wonder why?"

Kenneth was not especially interested in dolls, and, having discharged his duty as maid, turned to go. But Connie was not through with him.

"Ar'n't you going to hear me say my prayers and

keep me going? Jean always does,—that's my maid."

Kenneth drew a longer breath than at first. But Connie was persistent, and made him sit down in a chair while she put the sputtering candle on the floor, and, still holding the cat, knelt beside him with her head in his lap.

"You'll have to say them with me,—Jean does," she said, while Kenneth felt the cold sweat trickling down his back as he replied:

"I don't know what you want me to say."

There was a quick uplifting of the golden head, and Connie's blue eyes looked wonderingly at him.

"Why, 'Now I lay me,' and 'Our Father,' and the collect. Auntie is particular about that."

Kenneth sweat still more, for he had no idea what she meant by a *collect*. Such a thing was no part of the service in the church of The 4 Corners, or, if it was, they did not call it by that. He knew 'Now I lay me" and "Our Father," and used to say them, but had given them up, influenced by Hal, who said they were too big for such childish things. As deacon of the church, his father asked a blessing at the table, and had family prayers Sunday morning, but what the mischief a collect was Kenneth could not guess. Mrs. Hart, he knew, belonged to a church, like St. Jude's at Rocky Point, and with the rather narrow views in which he had been educated, he fancied a collect might be something heretical, or, at least, not quite orthodox. "Now I lay me" and "Our Father" were all right, and he began to repeat them,

stammeringly, but Connie's steady voice gave him courage and he kept on to the close, when he made a motion to get up.

"Wait, there's a lot more, and you, Kitty, keep quiet," Connie said.

The cat kept quiet, and Kenneth waited while Connie went on: "God bless Auntie and Guardy. I put him in because he saved papa's life." This to Kenneth. Then she continued: "Bless Jean, and make me a good girl; bless Kenneth and make him a good boy. (I am putting you in because I like you.) Amen!"

Kenneth was sweating now like rain, not cold sweat, but hot, which stood in drops upon his face, and there were tears in his eyes as he thought what a miserable lout he was compared with this little girl, who was not through with him yet.

"Now I must say the collect, and you must begin, for it's so long. I don't know half of it," she said, with a little cuff at the cat, which was trying to escape.

"I don't believe I know it, either. Can't you skip it?" Kenneth asked, and Connie answered:

"Skip it! No. That would be wicked. I must say it; and if you don't know that one, we'll say the *Stir Up* one. That's short and easy. Begin."

"Oh, Connie, I don't know that, either, nor what you mean," Kenneth gasped.

"That's smart! Not know the Stir Up!" came in a muffled voice from Kenneth's knee, which the cat

was scratching by this time, trying to get away from the hands holding it so tight.

"Keep still, can't you?" Connie said to the cat, and then began the collect for the 25th Sunday after Trinity, sometimes called "Stir Up Day."

"There! She's got away and gone under the table," she exclaimed, as the kitten made a spring for liberty.

Then she went on to the end and started for the cat, while Kenneth improved the opportunity to leave the room, feeling smaller and wickeder than he had ever felt since he stole melons from a neighbor's garden. Surely a little child was teaching him, and that night he said the neglected prayer of his childhood, kneeling in the darkness and cold of his own room, and promising himself never to omit it again if fifty Hals were there telling him it was nonsense.

CHAPTER V

CONNIE'S CHRISTMAS

After leaving Connie, Kenneth went to say good-night to Mrs. Hart, to whom he said, very deferentially: "I know from my father how warm your house is everywhere, and I know our bedrooms are cold. So, if you don't mind, I'll make a fire in your room in the morning before you are awake. I'll be very still."

When Kenneth began to speak, Mrs. Hart gave him a haughty stare. But as he went on her countenance relaxed, and she began for the first time to notice what a fine face and figure he had, and how well he spoke.

"Quite gentlemanly for the country," she thought, and smiled graciously, saying she did not like to trouble him herself, but she presumed Connie might be cold.

Kenneth, who would have gone through fire and water for Connie, was up by six o'clock next morning, and when Mrs. Hart awoke an hour and a half later, there was a bright fire crackling on the hearth, and her room was as comfortable as her own luxurious boudoir at home. Connie was not there. She had awakened early, dressed herself after a fashion, and gone down to reconnoitre. The deacon was going to

the barn and she went with him and saw him feed Sorrel, and herself threw some hay to him from the loft above, nearly tumbling through the opening in her eagerness to look down and see him get it. She saw the young kittens and the twelve cats taking their breakfast in two pans in the barn, as it was too cold to utilize the trough outside. She saw and was nearly knocked down by the dog, Chance, who, Kenneth said, was a Russian Collie, with royal blood in him. After her first scare at his boisterous greeting, Connie had no fear of him, and kept her hand on his shaggy mane as she made the tour of the barn, inspecting everything. She tried to catch a hen which she found upon its nest in a corner. But it eluded her grasp and flew cackling indignantly at being disturbed. And all the time she was asking innumerable questions about what was so new to her.

She was always asking questions, troublesome ones sometimes, which betrayed what her aunt never intended to have divulged. Mrs. Hart had given her sundry charges to hold her tongue, but she might as well have tried to stem Niagara. Connie liked to talk, and generally expressed her opinion freely. She had told the deacon that she didn't like the looks of his working clothes, and didn't quite like the smell of the barn, with its cows and pigs and chickens and cats. Then it suddenly occurred to her that it was Christmas morning, and she said, "Ar'n't I going to have a present?"

"Why, that's a fact. You or'to have," the deacon replied, and Connie continued: "I had a lot at home,

and I'm going to buy one for aunty any way,—one of your antiques, if they are not too high. Where are they?"

The deacon looked perplexed and asked what she meant.

"Why," she replied, "Auntie said there were piles of quaint, old-fashioned things here, and the dictionary says *quaint* means antique, and Auntie likes 'em, the older and more worn they are the better. Where are they, and will two dollars get a good one?"

She was looking earnestly at the deacon, who stroked her fair hair and replied: "I guess I'm the biggest antique on the premises, and I'm not for sale. The house and everything in it is old-fashioned,—antique; that's what your auntie meant, not that we have a lot of truck to sell; but I'm sorry we have no present for you."

"Oh, never mind," Connie replied. "I have heaps at home,—eight dolls and a big doll house; but, oh, my auntie said I was not to tell you that, because—" She put her hand over her mouth a moment, then, as if the effort were too great, she burst out, "what is a *hunks,* and are you one?"

"What do you mean?" the deacon asked again, and Connie replied: "Auntie says you are, and wouldn't like it if you knew she gave twenty-five dollars for my doll house."

The deacon was not at all sensitive and at once understood the situation.

"Connie," he said, with a laugh, "a hunks, in this case, means a man who has the charge of a little girl's

money and does not want her to spend it so fast that by-and-by it will all be gone."

"Oh, yes, I see. I'm glad it isn't anything bad, because I like you," Connie said, holding his hand and hippetehopping back to the house, where her aunt, who had come down and was looking for her, met her in some dismay.

"Connie," she exclaimed, "where have you been, and what a fright you are. Your dress not half buttoned, nor your boots either. There's hay in your hair, and a feather, too, and you smell of the barn. Come upstairs at once and make yourself tidy."

There were traces of tears on Connie's face when she came down to breakfast after having been scolded and made tidy, but she kept up bravely, for Kenneth told her he was to take her for a walk when breakfast was over, and she was soon ready, in her blue cloak and hood, which the boy thought the prettiest garments he had ever seen.

"Now, show me things," she said, drawing a deep breath. "I like it, it is all so big and free, without carts and cars and folks, and you see so far."

The day was unusually warm for the season. The soft rain in the night had melted the snow, leaving a clear path to a ledge of rocks in a huckleberry pasture, against which a rough shed had been built as a shelter for the sheep. It was open on one side, commanding a fine view of the country for miles to the west and south. Here Kenneth took Connie, who was fond of nature in all its aspects, and expanded like some delicate flower in the warm sunshine, with the lovely

panorama of mountains and hills and valleys and woods spread out before her.

"It's just like a picture, and I like it," she said, seating herself upon an old wooden chair which Harry had brought there with his book the summer before when he wanted to read and not be asked to do anything. The deacon had few sheep now, and as those were kept in another pasture, the inclosure was very clean and covered with grass, which looked fresh and green after the rain and the snow.

"Just the place for a Christmas tree! I have always had one for years and years, ever since I can remember," Connie said, with the air of a woman of fifty.

Kenneth thought a moment and then replied: "Tell me what you do. I've never seen one, but have an idea."

"Never seen a Christmas tree!" and Connie looked as if she thought him a heathen as she began a graphic description of the little trees her aunt had for her in the bow window of the dining-room.

Ornaments and tapers and dolls and candy and toys of every description made a most bewildering picture to Kenneth. He might manage the tree, he thought, as he glanced at a clump of pines not far away, but the ornaments and ribbons and tapers and dolls and candy discouraged him. Then suddenly he remembered the little sled in the garret, and the walnuts and butternuts and cakes of maple sugar in the pantry, and a picture-book of animals given him as a reward of merit by one of his teachers when he was a little

shaver. Then there was the knife bought for Harry, and the mittens his mother had knit, and the skates his father had bought. He could put these on the tree and make believe Hal was there to get them. There had been no presents thought of for him. Everything was for Hal, but he didn't mind. If others were happy he was, and he had all he could desire in the little girl sitting so quietly in the old chair and looking off upon the landscape.

"Connie," he said at last, "would you like a tree here in the sheep cote, even if it didn't have all those jimcracks? A real country tree, I mean?"

"I guess I would," she answered, emphasizing each word with a kick upon the rounds of the chair.

"Well, then," Kenneth said, "I think I can manage it this afternoon, but you must say nothing about it."

Connie was accustomed to being told, "Not a word out of your head," by her aunt. The words generally came just the same, but in this instance she kept them in, and through the dinner said nothing, nor after it, when Kenneth disappeared and no one knew where he was, although his mother thought she saw him once come from the garret and once from the pantry. To Connie the time seemed very long, with only the dog to play with. She couldn't find the kitten, and finally stole out to the barn to hunt for it and the other cats, the most of whom ran from her and hid. She saw the pigs and threw them some apples and looked for the hen she had frightened in the morning. Then she went up the stairs, and with the pitch-

fork threw some hay down to Sorrel as she had seen the deacon do, and was wondering what to do next, when "Connie! Connie!" came up to her from Kenneth, who was looking for her. His tree was ready and he had come to take her to it. There was more hay in her hair and dress than there had been in the morning, but Kenneth brushed it off and the two were soon on their way to the sheep cote, where Connie went into screams of delight at sight of a pretty little pine which Kenneth had cut down and trimmed and fixed securely in its place. In front of it was the sled, its red trimmings showing well against the green background. Tied here and there among the boughs was a curious collection. The old picture-book, with a big elephant turned to the front, papers of maple sugar and walnuts, and butternuts, which Kenneth had cracked in the barn; two or three bunches of grapes and some rosy-cheeked apples; the knife intended for Harry, the mittens and skates, which Kenneth had managed to spirit away when his mother did not see him. There were also some sandwiches for the dog, who seemed to know what was going on and ran in circles and stamped his feet and barked until Kenneth called him to order and made him lie down by the chair.

That was all, but Kenneth had arranged everything so artistically that the effect was very good, especially as he had mixed with the greens a few scarlet holly berries, which he had found in the garden, and a red candlestick in which a candle was burning. Connie was eager to inspect everything. But Kenneth kept her back.

"I am to call off, and you come up as you do at home," he said, taking his place by the tree, on which the low western sun was shining, lighting it up here and there, as if there were many tapers upon it instead of one poor tallow candle.

The sled was the first thing given, and Connie grew so excited over it that until twice repeated she did not hear her name when called for the maple sugar, which she began at once to eat, as she did the grapes which came next. The book and nuts were last, and by that time her mouth was full, and there were smears of sugar and grape juice on her face and stains on her blue cloak. But she was very happy, and better pleased than she had been at home with the costliest toys. Alternating with her name was that of Chance, who, with wonderful sagacity, seemed to comprehend the matter and sat with great gravity by Connie until his name was called. Then he went with a bound to the tree, and making short work of his sandwich walked back again to his post, waiting for the next call.

"Now, then," Kenneth said, when the last paper of nuts was handed to Connie, "I want you to make believe you are Harry and come up for him."

"All right," was Connie's reply, as she put into her mouth a piece of sugar so big that she could scarcely articulate plainly.

The knife was given out, and the mittens and the skates, and Connie put them on her sled and seemed waiting for more.

"That's all, except the candle," Kenneth said, while Connie's face grew troubled.

"Arn't you to have anything? Is everything for Harry and nothing for you?" she asked; and Kenneth replied, "I guess that's about the size of it."

"Why?" Connie continued. "Why everything for Harry and nothing for you? Is he a better boy?"

"I don't know," Kenneth replied. "Perhaps he is. He has always had more things than I. You see his father and mother are dead, and then he is a great deal handsomer than I am."

"Ar'n't you handsome?" Connie said, rolling the piece of sugar from side to side in her mouth and letting more of it run down her face and on to her cloak.

"What do you think?" Kenneth asked, with a laugh, while Connie scrutinized him so closely that he felt himself blushing to the roots of his hair. "Well?" he said, after a moment; and Connie answered, "I don't know whether you are as handsome as Harry or not, and I don't care. You are the bestest boy and have the goodest face I ever saw, and I love you."

Before Kenneth could reply Connie was at his side, saying to him: "You sit down and I'll call your name. You've got to have something."

"But there's nothing for me except the candle," Kenneth suggested; and Connie persisted: "Yes, there is something Harry will never get,—never. You'll see. Sit down," and throwing off her hood and pushing back her hair with sticky hands, she stood up very straight by the tree, while Kenneth sat down and waited.

"Kenneth Stannard!" she called, and Kenneth

went forward, meeting the impulsive little girl, who threw herself upon him, and, winding her arms around his neck and pressing her face against his, said: "I give myself to you!"

Just for one moment Kenneth was taken by surprise, and didn't know what to do. Then, releasing the arms clinging so close that they nearly strangled him, he kissed the mouth besmeared with sugar and grape-juice, and said: "Thank you, Connie. You are the nicest present I could have. I shall keep you always; and now don't you think we'd better be going home? The sun is nearly down and the candle burnt out. I'll draw you on the sled."

"Yes, but—" and Connie hesitated a moment. "There is something we ought to do. Have a kind of service as they do in the church, only leave out 'miserable sinners'; there's so much of that. Jean took me to a Sunday-school tree last year and they had carols about the 'Silent Nights,' and 'Hark, the Heralds,' and 'Peace on Earth,' and what they believed. We ought to say that anyway, or sing something."

Remembering the previous night and the Stir Up collect, Kenneth began to feel very crawly, and said, "I can't sing."

"I can. Listen," was the quick response, as Connie began a carol familiar to her.

But her mouth was too full of sugar to allow of much execution, and after a few croaks she stopped, a little discomfited by her failure. Brightening soon, she said: "Any way we can bow our heads and say what we believe, only you must keep me going. Begin!"

She put her hands together and dropped her head and waited while Kenneth grew more and more crawly. This was worse than the Stir Up. In the church he had always attended he had never heard the Creed that he could remember; certainly he had never learned it, and he finally said so. Connie's head came up with a jerk, and her eyes flashed as she exclaimed: "For the pity's sake and the Old Harry, don't you know about the 'I believe,' nor the 'miserable sinners,' nor anything?"

"I'm afraid I don't," Kenneth answered meekly. "But I'm going to if I can find the book which has these things in it. What is it?"

"Why, the Bible, of course," Connie answered, with great assurance.

Kenneth didn't think so. He had read the Bible through, hired to do so by his mother, and he could recall nothing of the "Stir Up" in it, or "I believe," or miserable sinners," except in a general way. But there was a book somewhere which had it all, and some time he meant to get it and be posted.

As he had proved so incompetent to help her, Connie gave up the service she had thought necessary, and they were soon on their way home, Connie on the sled with her cloak tucked carefully around her, and in her lap the picture-book, skates, mittens and knife, and whatever of sugar and nuts and grapes she had not eaten. It was very muddy, and part of the way was up hill, but Kenneth never minded it all, and would have walked miles with his little chatty load, who was creeping into his boy's heart so far that it

was doubtful if the heart of man could ever dislodge her.

"The bestest Christmas I ever had," was Connie's verdict of a day which in after years would come back to her and to Kenneth both, over and over, with a wish that what had been might be again, although they knew that was impossible.

CHAPTER VI

THE MORRISES

The next day it rained and the next, and Mrs. Hart grew very restless and tired. But she had promised to stay a week, and she would do it, and then say good-by for ever to the humdrum life as it went on at the farmhouse. Connie, on the contrary, was very happy. She could not go out on her sled, it is true, but six of the barn cats had been allowed entrance to the house, and when she tired of these Kenneth took her to the ball-room, which filled her with ecstasy and set her in motion at once.

"I'll show you I can do it," she said, when Kenneth told her of the many dances given there when the house was a tavern and his father a boy, and that he was trying to learn. "I'll show you," and she went pirouetting up and down the long room, whirling like a little fairy and holding her short skirt as she had seen older ones do in the dancing class she attended. She knew a great deal which Kenneth did not know, and coached him for hours during the rainy days, proving so good a teacher that when the lessons were over he felt that he had learned nearly as much as during the whole term at Millville.

The third day the rain ceased, the air was fresher and the sun came out warm and bright. At the break-

fast table Mr. Stannard remarked that one of the blinds of the Morris house had come open, and Kenneth must go and shut it.

"I, too," Connie said, eager to go where Kenneth went.

She had looked with a great deal of interest at the silent house, which Kenneth told her belonged to Harry, and was eager to go over it. Kenneth carried her in his arms across the muddy road, and put her down inside the gate on the gravel walk, which was wet and full of weeds. The grounds were large and showed signs of former care and beauty, but were now mere sodden patches of decay. There had once been a fountain fed from a spring further up the hill, and the central figure was a little boy and girl under an umbrella. But the pipes were burst and the supply of water cut off. The basin was crumbling, and only the boy and girl stood bravely up, defying the elements and time.

"Now let's go in," Connie said, after admiring the boy and girl, and they went into the wide hall, with its broad stairs and wide railing of solid oak. "It seems as if the folks were all dead," Connie said, as their footfalls made hollow sounds and their voices echoed through the great high rooms into which they had passed, the two parlors with folding doors between and a large bow window looking out upon a lawn terraced down the hill to the south.

There were handsome marble mantels and inlaid hearths and carved woodwork and signs of former grandeur everywhere, and Connie, who appreciated it

all, held her breath as she went through the lower rooms and then ascended the stairs and followed Kenneth through one room after another, with here and there pieces of furniture standing in them. Young as she was, Connie's perceptions were mature and quick, and she recognized the difference between this house and the one across the way.

"Grand folks used to live here. Where are they? Tell me about them," she said, as they stood in what had been Mrs. Morris' bed-chamber, where Harry was born and his mother had died, and where a mahogany bedstead and bureau, with a stationary washstand and silver faucet were still standing.

"All dead but Hal," Kenneth answered, as they sat down in a deep seat of one of the windows.

"Yes, Hal. That's Harry, who had everything on the tree and you nothing," Connie replied. "Why don't he live here, where there are bowls and things for the water to come in and go out, as we have in the city, and a hole in the floor for the heat to come through?"

She had spied a rusty register and was trying to open it, and her tone implied that this house was more to her taste than the farmhouse, and Kenneth felt a little hurt, but soon recovered himself and told her of the times, as he had heard of them from his mother, when his Uncle Morris lived there with his wife, a frail, lovely young girl who, knowing nothing of the world as her husband knew it, could not keep pace with his ideas and shrank from the gay company with which he filled the house.

"He had the best horses in the country for the men to ride," Kenneth said, "and packs of dogs to hunt with in the fall, and my aunt had a maid and a nurse, who wore a cap, with great long strings, for Hal, until she died."

"Oh-h!" Connie said, "that was splendid," her natural love for luxury coming to the surface. "And your aunt died in that bed, and Harry was born in it?" she continued, walking round on three sides of the bedstead and stroking it with her hands, while there awoke in her heart a kind of pity for Harry, who, by the death of his mother, and something in his father, she couldn't quite make out what, had been obliged to leave this handsome home for the farmhouse, where there was no mahogany furniture, no nurses with caps and streamers and no maids.

"I'd like to see Harry," she said. "I wonder if I ever shall, and if I should like him as well as I do you. Give him my love, and say I'm sorry for him."

"Sorry! Why?" Kenneth asked, and something in his tone made Connie look up quickly before she replied. "Sorry that his folks are dead,—his pretty mother and his father, who must have been a gentleman like those in New York,—and because he had to leave this handsome house."

Kenneth was really hurt now. Here was flunkeyism he had not expected.

"Connie," he said, in a voice not quite like the one which had called her to the tree, "would you rather live here with Harry than across the road with me?"

Connie thought a moment, and then replied: "You see, I'd like the nice things over here, but I don't know Harry, and I am sure I like you the best and would rather be where you are. Do you think you can draw me on the sled this morning?"

She had made a rapid descent from the sentimental to the practical, but Kenneth was satisfied, and promised a sled ride in the afternoon, which was undertaken through the mud and over stones, until they ran into a rut and the sled was overturned, depositing Connie on the grass and soiling her blue cloak till, what with the mud stains and the sugar stains and grape juice, Mrs. Hart declared it spoiled and fit only for the old clothes man, who would get it as soon as she returned to New York.

That night there came a letter to Kenneth from Harry and, at Connie's request, he began to read it aloud. Harry was much elated with his visit, and was having "a jam up good time," he wrote, whereupon Connie, according to her habit, asked what "a jam up good time" was, and if it were like what she was having. She was promptly silenced by her aunt, and Kenneth read on, seeing far ahead, and skipping here and there when he came upon dangerous grounds for strangers' ears. Connie was listening with rapt attention, and a growing interest in the boy who was in clover and his native element, among swells.

"What is *clover?* And what are *swells?*" Connie asked, but her auntie told her to hush, and that both terms were slang.

Then Kenneth continued reading in substance that

Hal didn't get up till nine or ten o'clock, unless he chose, and that "a fire was made in his room every morning by a nigger, which was O.K."

Connie opened her lips to ask what "O.K." meant, but her aunt shook her head, and she jotted it down in her mind to be hunted for in the dictionary later on, with "*jam up!*"

Harry went out to ride or drive every day, he said, with Tom, and when on horseback a "nigger" went with them to open the gates if their road was through the pastures. He had been to Versailles and Frankfort, and many times to Lexington, as Cedar Bank was near there. He had also been out into the country to Morrisford on the river, named for his ancestors, who used to live there, and where his father was born.

"It isn't any great," he wrote; "not half as fine as Morris Place at The 4 Corners must have been, and shall be again, if I live; but fine places here don't count as they do with us. It is blood, and I've got a lot of it on father's side. Why, when he was a boy, before the war, the Morrises had shot one or two people in a quarrel and had a hundred niggers! Think of it! and a few of the old ones are still living round there in log cabins, working some and stealing more, folks say. There's an old auntie,—Aunt Polly, —who looks like a mummy. She was owned by my grandfather Morris. He was a colonel. I didn't know that till I came here. In fact, I didn't know what good stock I sprang from, and, I tell you, I feel proud that I am a Morris. Aunt Polly was my

father's nurse, and when they told her who I was she nearly strangled me with her black, skinny arms. Called me Mas'r Harry; said she was 'Mas'r Charles' ole mammy, and nussed him from a baby.' I tell you, I felt big, with Tom Haynes standing by and hearing it all. There were more darkies in the Aunt Polly line, who came pressing up, with their 'How dy's,' and 'God bless you, mas'r,' and 'Has you a bit of backy?' This was from a babboon, who might have been a hundred, and who claimed to be a Morris 'bawn and raised on de ole plantation befo' de wah,' in which he said he took a part,—on which side I didn't ask or care. As true as you live, I began to have a fellow feeling of relationship to these niggers, and feed every mother's son of them. Tom said it was the right thing to do, and as I didn't want to seem mean, I gave out right and left till I had only fifty cents left in my pocket, and, Ken, I must have some more by hook or by crook——"

Here Kenneth, who saw breakers ahead, broke down with a cough, while Connie chimed in, "What is 'by hook or by crook'?"

"More slang," her aunt whispered to her, and Connie put it down in her mind to be hunted up with "O.K."

As Kenneth continued to cough, Mrs. Hart felt sure that the rest of the letter was not for strangers' ears, and left the room, taking Connie with her.

"I don't believe I ought to have read as much as I did," Kenneth said, when Mrs. Hart was gone, "but Connie wanted to hear it, and I got at it and couldn't

very well stop. I did skip some, but hear what he says:

"You see a gentleman and a Morris can't visit in a gentleman's house without money to spend, and ten dollars was a paltry sum any way, when you consider that it is my own, or will be when I come of age. I tell you what, Ken, Uncle Eph must shell out ten more at least and send me. There must be that much due me; if not, tell him to loan it and keep it back from my next allowance. I can skimp at home, but not here, where they look upon me as a sort of millionaire. I'm awful glad Tom did not go home with me as he proposed doing. When I'm of age I shall fix up the Morris Place and invite him there with some more bloods, and perhaps I'll have some of Aunt Polly's brood as servants, and, by George, why not have Aunt Polly, too, if she is alive? An old family servant like that, who has been a slave, would add *eclat* to my establishment; don't you think so?

"I suppose Connie Elliott is with you now, as you wrote she was coming. Just for a minute, after I got your letter with uncle's consent for me to come to Kentucky, I half wished I was going home to see her, but am glad I came here. Tom has a sister, eleven years old, pretty and shy, and will some day have quite a fortune from her father and her aunt, who lives in Louisville, and has no children of her own. Think of her sending fifty dollars to the Haynes family, to be spent as they like for Christmas presents. That's the kind of an aunt to have when

your pocket is empty, like mine. Give my regards to Connie and write me if she is pretty. Get ten dollars for me somehow.

"Yours,

"HAL."

Several times during the reading of the letter the deacon had moved uneasily in his chair, crossing and recrossing his legs, and twice going to the door to spit. He did not like the tone of the letter. Neither did his wife. It was the Morris blood cropping out, and they had seen too much of that when Charles Morris lived across the way and tried to lord it over his neighbors. They remembered his fast horses and hounds and carousals, and remembered the white-faced girl who died when she heard of his dissipations when he was away from The 4 Corners. They remembered, too, that with all his faults, there was a smooth exterior and a pleasant way which took with people, and Harry had the same and had made them love him almost as their own. His father was a spendthrift, but had left enough to supply every reasonable want of his son when it was looked after as carefully as the deacon looked after it. Ten dollars had been thought ample for his spending money at Cedar Grove, and here he was asking for ten more.

"I s'pose we must get it somehow," he said. "The Morrises were high steppers, and I dare say the Hayneses are the same, and Hal wants to keep up his end; but I don't like the way he wrote, as if he was lookin' down upon us because he is a Morris.

Great Scott! his father was a villain, with all his polish and blood, and if he had lived he'd spent every cent he was wuth. The dog! I knew him!"

The deacon was a good deal excited, and in the letter which he sent to Harry next day, with ten dollars, he told him not to make a fool of himself because he was a Morris.

"The Morrises are well enough," he wrote, "but, Lord Harry, that isn't all. It needs something besides being a Morris to make a man."

CHAPTER VII

GOOD-BYE

Kenneth said it to Connie with a swelling heart, just a week from the day when he first saw her at the station, in her blue cloak and hood. Mrs. Hart had stayed her allotted time, and had felt that each day she stayed grew longer and more tiresome. She had impressed upon Connie that, although the country might be nice in many respects, it was not a desirable place in which to stay, or to visit very often, and Connie was about equally divided between her love for the city and country. She had had a "jam up good time," she said, remembering Harry's letter, but before she could get farther, her aunt stopped her.

"You have learned a great deal of slang," she said; "more than you will forget in a year. You have spoiled your blue cloak and two pairs of boots, besides romping quite too much with the cats and the dog and Kenneth. You are too familiar with him. I heard you ask him if he was never going to hear your prayers again. What did you mean?"

When Mrs. Hart assumed this tone and manner, Connie always succumbed, and she now told her aunt of that first night, when Kenneth heard her prayers, and that since then she had always asked a blessing on him, the "bestest boy in the world."

"Yes, Kenneth is a good boy," Mrs. Hart said, "and when you get home you may send him a prayer-book. I dare say he never saw one. There is no church here."

"Why, yes, there is," Connie replied. "There is one close by, where Kenneth goes, and all of them. Haven't you seen it?"

"Oh, the meeting-house. That's different," was Mrs. Hart's reply, while Connie looked puzzled.

She had been puzzled a good deal of the time since she came to the country, and had learned many things she would not soon forget, and she was sorry to leave. But there was no alternative. They were going in the morning, and she bade good-bye to the cats and the cows and hens and Sorrel, but reserved her farewell to Chance for the station, as Kenneth said he was to go there with them. There had been one long sled ride in the mud and what little snow there was, and Connie had told Kenneth she would love him forever and ever, and that she was to send him a book with "I believe" and "Stir up" and "miserable sinners" and everything in it, and he was to read it through and know more the next time she saw him.

And Kenneth promised everything, and felt his heart grow heavier as he listened and remembered that to-morrow she would be gone, and probably that was the last of Connie he would see for years. She told him her auntie would invite him to New York, where she would show him things, not like cats and hens, but the Brooklyn Bridge and a ferry-boat. Kenneth had not much faith in being asked by Mrs. Hart

to visit New York. He had read that lady pretty well, and guessed how glad she was to leave them and how little chance there was for him to see Connie often.

Mrs. Hart thought herself a very good woman, who tried to do her duty religiously. She had spent a week at the farmhouse and been treated like a queen, and was grateful for it, and meant at some future time to send a present to each of the family in token of her appreciation, but when Mrs. Stannard asked about Arnold's in New York, and if it wasn't the best place to buy a black cashmere such as she had in mind, and said she'd often thought she'd like to see the big stores, Mrs. Hart did not seem to take the hint. To shop at any fashionable place in New York with Mrs. Stannard was impossible, or to have her for a guest. She could give her the cashmere, but she could not help her buy it, or invite her to New York. Kenneth had been very nice to her and Connie, and she would send him something besides a prayer-book,—a silver-backed clothes-brush and possibly a manicure set. She had noticed that his hands were rough and his nails not what they should be. Perhaps he would not know what it was, but that other boy might. He was a Morris, and different. This was Mrs. Hart's reasoning on the morning she made her preparations for leaving. She had had a very pleasant, restful time, and they had been so kind to her, she said to Mrs. Stannard, who was secretly hoping for an invitation to spend a few days in New York. There were several things besides a

black cashmere which she would like to get, and she wanted to see the big city. But no hint that she was expected was given when Mrs. Hart finally said good-bye.

Connie had wanted to take her sled with her, but this her aunt had forbidden, as she did the taking of a kitten when Connie proposed it. She would not mind having Chance, she said, patting the beautiful dog, who was keeping close to Connie as if he knew she was going. "He would be splendid for the seashore next summer."

But the dog was not for sale, the deacon said, and then it was time to go if they would catch the New York train. Kenneth went to the station with them, and felt as if his throat would burst when the last good-bye was said and Connie's bright face had disappeared in the car which was taking her away "forever, I am afraid," he said to himself, as he drove back to the house, which seemed so empty and still.

The little muddy sled on which he had drawn the child many a mile was standing on the front doorstep, and he took it to the pump and cleaned it and carried it to the garret and hung it away reverently, sadly, as we put aside some article the dead have worn. As he came down the stairs he met Chance, holding something white in his mouth, and shaking his head and stamping his feet, his way of attracting attention. It was one of Connie's handkerchiefs, used on Christmas Day, and left in the inclosure to which Chance, on his way home from the station, had made a detour. It was stained with sugar and grape juice,

but Kenneth washed it at the pump as he had the sled, and taking it to the garret, spread it over the sled to dry.

Two days later there came a letter from Mrs. Hart, telling of her safe arrival home, and saying Connie was well and sent her love and a prayer-book to Kenneth. It was a very handsome edition, and on the fly leaf Connie had printed in big letters, "To KENNETH, FROM CONNIE." She had wanted to add, "with love," but her aunt objected. So she printed on a piece of paper which she put in the book: "With Connie's love, and you'll find 'I believe' and 'stir up' and 'miserable sinners' and everything in it."

Kenneth read it through, and began, in a dim way, to understand what was done in churches like the one Connie attended, and the following Sunday he drove to St. Jude's in Rocky Point, a distance of six or seven miles. He had seen but little of the world, and the pretty church, with its three or four memorial windows and candles on the altar, seemed a great contrast to the primitive building at The 4 Corners, where there was seldom even a flower to brighten it. The candles puzzled him, as he could not see why they were needed, when the sun was shining brightly. He was interested in the vested choir, in which he recognized one or two boys who attended the Millville Academy with him, but thought it would take a great deal to make him march with that white gown on, as they did. He was seated near the door, where he could see everything, and as he had brought his prayer-book, he tried to follow the service, succeeding

pretty well, and finding the "I believe" and the "miserable sinners," but failing in the "stir up." It was all very new and very strange, but it was Connie's church, and must be right, he said to his father when, on his return home, he told what he had seen and heard.

"All ceremony," the deacon said, shaking his head. "All ceremony, except the 'I believe' you talk about. That's our creed, too, though I don't think it has been said in Sunday-school in years. It ought to be, and I'll speak to the superintendent to have the children learn it. That's all right, and the rest may be. I won't judge too harsh. I wasn't brought up that way, but I'll see to that creed."

As a result of the little mustard seed Connie had sown, the children in the church at The 4 Corners, and the grown people as well, were in a few weeks rehearsing what they believed in a manner which would have been highly satisfactory to Connie, could she have heard them. Kenneth's voice usually took the lead, and there was always in his heart a thought of the little girl, and the prayer she had said, with her head in his lap, and the Christmas tree by the ledge of rocks, sacred to him now as the church itself, because Connie had been there and told him of things he was learning to understand.

Three weeks after Mrs. Hart's departure there came an express package from New York directed to Mrs. Stannard, who, never having received one before, was in a state of great excitement until it was opened, and greater still when she saw the contents,—

a dress pattern of black cashmere, finer and more expensive than she would ever have bought for herself, with all the linings and trimmings and directions how to have it made. There was also a silver-backed clothes brush for Kenneth, but the manicure set was omitted. These, Mrs. Hart wrote, were presents from Connie, who had been greatly interested in buying and sending them. They were going South for February and March, and she would possibly go abroad in the spring. This was late in January, and some time in February Kenneth received a newspaper from Jacksonville announcing the arrival of Mrs. Hart, niece and maid at the St. James, while the deacon received a few lines from Mrs. Hart, asking that Connie's quarterly remittance be sent to St. Augustine, and that it be as large as possible, in order to meet the increase of expenses. The money was sent and a receipt returned, and then for years the chapter of Kenneth's life, as connected directly with Connie, was closed.

CHAPTER VIII

AFTER MANY YEARS

Fourteen years is a long time to look forward to, but looking back it does not seem very long, since Kenneth bade good-bye to Connie, and hung her sled in the attic, with the stained handkerchief drying upon it. The sled is hanging there still, and the handkerchief is lying in one of Kenneth's bureau drawers, yellow and soiled, for no water has touched it since he washed it at the pump and put it away to dry. The prayer-book shows marks of constant usage, and Kenneth goes regularly to St. Jude's, which to himself he still calls Connie's church. He has worked his way through college, and at his graduation no one stood higher in his class than Kenneth Stannard, the boy from The 4 Corners, who swept the halls and did many menial offices to help himself along.

Connie has been at the farmhouse but once since her first visit there, and that was in the summer eight years after the memorable Christmas, and when she was fourteen and Kenneth twenty-two. He had dreamed of her coming night after night, and always saw her in her blue cloak and hood, as she had been when he bade her good-by. He knew there must be a change, but was not quite prepared for the slender, dignified girl, who wore an enormous hat and called

him Mr. Stannard. She was, however, inexpressibly lovely, he thought, with her flower-like face and great blue eyes, which laughed when she laughed, but oftener drooped shyly under long, thick lashes. But for the eyes, and the smile which lighted up her whole face, Kenneth would hardly have recognized in her the little girl of six whom he had drawn for miles and miles through slush and mud. Did she remember it, he wondered, and the Christmas tree? If she did, she made no sign, and he would not refer to it, or tell her that he knew the contents of the prayer-book now as well as she did. She could only spend a day, or a part of it, as her aunt had left her at the station, while she went on to Albany to visit a friend, and was to call for her in the evening. She was very sweet and gracious, but a little too dignified for her years, Kenneth thought, as he tried to entertain her.

"Would you like to go to the huckleberry pasture?" he asked, after dinner was over.

"Oh, yes," she said, with the old eagerness of manner, and they were soon on their way to the spot where they had once had their Christmas tree.

It was no longer used for sheep, for the deacon had none. But Kenneth had kept the place up, and when the old chair fell to pieces he made another, in which he sometimes sat on Sunday afternoons, reading Connie's prayer-book.

"Oh, I remember this place so well," Connie said, sitting down in the chair, and drawing long breaths as she looked off across the stretches of woods and

valleys and hills, bright in their summer robes and bathed in sunshine.

Kenneth was standing where the tree had stood, leaning on a timber which supported that side of the inclosure, and Connie thought what a fine face and figure he had, and felt a faint stir of something she could not define, as she met his eyes fixed so earnestly upon her.

"Tell me of your college life," she said. "I was so glad when I heard you had gone. Was that cousin of yours there, too, and where is he? You know I have never seen him."

Kenneth was glad to talk of his own college life, which had closed that summer, but had nothing good to say of Hal, who from Andover had entered Harvard, spending money so recklessly that the deacon had refused to meet his bills. There was lark after lark, as Hal called them, until at last there was one too many, and the deacon was notified to take the young man home, if he would prevent open disgrace. Hal came home, good-natured and silver-tongued as ever, and half made Mr. and Mrs. Stannard believe that the fault had been with the professor, who misunderstood him, and with his companions, who had let him take the blame in which they should have shared. He was of age now and in Boston, pretending to study law and coming home occasionally for a day or so, to be waited upon like a prince by his Aunt Mary, who always went down before his dark eyes and soft, musical voice, which seldom failed to stir the heart of women. Kenneth could not tell this to

Connie, but he told her Hal had been in Harvard, and was now in Boston studying law, and then the conversation drifted away from him to Kenneth himself, Connie asking what he meant to do, now he was through college.

"Stay here on the farm?" and her voice implied that she thought he might do better.

Kenneth detected the tone, and answered quickly:

"Not on the farm, perhaps, but here in the country, as an M.D. I am to study medicine with Dr. Catherin at Rocky Point. He is the greatest doctor in these parts,—is sent for far and near for counsel. You've heard of him, perhaps?"

Connie believed she had, and was glad that Kenneth was to be with so eminent a man, and hoped he would become as celebrated. She certainly was a little stiff, and remained so the rest of the day, until they were on their way to the station, just as the sun was setting. Kenneth had proposed driving her down, but she insisted upon walking, the evening was so fine, and she wanted the exercise, she said. For a time she was very silent, but when they were half way down the hill, near a bit of broken wall, she said: "Let's sit here and rest."

The full moon was rising, and threw a flood of light on her face as she turned suddenly to Kenneth, calling him now by that name instead of Mr. Stannard, as she had done through the day.

"I *must* call you Kenneth for once," she said. "I wanted to all the time, but you seemed so big and so tall, with whiskers, and the boy Kenneth's face was

so smooth, and I thought maybe you wouldn't like it, and I am fourteen, and must drop all my childish manners, auntie says. She tells me to be womanly, and not say out all I think and feel, and I do try to, and I have been trained into a kind of automaton; but it's so hard, especially here, where I haven't acted myself. But don't think I've forgotten, for I haven't. I remember the week spent here, and know I was a very pert, forward child, asking questions I ought not to have asked, and telling everything I knew. Don't stop me," she continued, as Kenneth began to protest. "I know what I did, and am ashamed of some things, but was so happy with the cats and in the barn and on that sled, and at the Christmas tree. Oh, that tree! How many times I have dreamed of it, and of the boy who gave everything and had nothing for himself."

"Yes, I had," Kenneth interrupted eagerly. "I had *you!* Don't you remember? You called me up and gave yourself to me, and I said I'd keep you forever!"

There was a good deal of the woman in the young girl of fourteen and the bright color flamed into her cheeks as she replied:

"I was a child, and did not know any better. I have taken it back."

"No, Connie. Don't do that," Kenneth said, impulsively, and laid his hand on hers.

For a moment Connie's clear blue eyes looked at him with something like rebuke in them; then, with a toss of her head, which made her like the Connie of the sled, she said:

"It isn't worth having. I am not what I was then. I have been moulded and trained till there is but little left of the Connie you used to know, though in some things I am unchanged. I told you you were the *'bestest boy'* and had the *'goodest face'* I ever saw, and—and—I think so still."

The moon was shining full upon her, bringing out every point of her beauty, and Kenneth might have stooped and kissed her, as he did when she first told him her opinion of him, had it not been that just then the mail carrier from the post-office at The 4 Corners came down the hill:

"Hallo!" he called, stopping suddenly as he recognized Connie, who he knew had been spending the day at the farmhouse, and was presumably bound for the train. "If either of you is goin' to the cars, you haven't much time to spare. Better climb in here."

"I must not be left. Let's get in!" Connie exclaimed, and they were soon driving rapidly to the station, which they reached just as the train came up, and Mrs. Hart's face looked from the window in quest of Connie.

There was only time for a hurried good-by, and then the train sped on its way, and Connie was gone for a second time.

Time passed, and news came that she had gone abroad and was in France, in a convent school, and the following autumn Kenneth entered the office of Dr. Catherin at Rocky Point, proving himself so apt a student and exercising so good judgment that before he was graduated the doctor gave him a part of his

large practice. After his graduation he opened an office in Millville and another at his home at The 4 Corners, where the people were very proud of their young M.D. And Kenneth was a man to be proud of, whether as a citizen or physician or son. He was not exactly handsome, as we understand the term, but he had just the face which strangers trust, and which sick people like to see at their bedside. With his tall figure and fine physique, he was a man to be noticed among scores of other men, and one of whom Connie would say that he had more than the "goodest" face in the world, if she could see him now. She has been his guiding star, and not an honor has ever been conferred upon him that has not brought with it a thought of her and a wish that she knew. In the stable are two young horses, necessary for his practice, and he calls them Pro and Con, the latter being as near Connie's name as he dares to come. She is a graceful, high-strung, nervous animal, full of capers and quirks, and rebelling against being hitched to a post, and usually running away if she is not. Pro is gentler and more quiet, and will stand unhitched for hours, while his master is visiting his patients. And yet Kenneth loves Con the best, and pets her the most, and talks sometimes to her of the Connie far away, whom he would give worlds to see, and from whom he seldom hears.

When Hal came of age, and the management of his property was turned over to him, he found everything straight to a penny, but was disappointed that his fortune was not larger. With his tastes and habits he

wanted a great deal of money, and he spent a great deal, and would have borrowed of Kenneth, if his cousin would have loaned him. Once he offered to mortgage his house, but Kenneth refused, with the result that there sprung up a coolness on Harry's part, and for a long time he neither came home nor wrote. Then suddenly he appeared one day, gracious and good-natured as ever, delighted to see the old place, proud of Kenneth's success, and very affectionate to his aunt. Kenneth felt sure he had something in his mind. "Only wait and it will come out," he thought, and that night, when they were seated upon the piazza, enjoying the cool breeze, he told them what he wanted.

CHAPTER IX

THE HOUSE PARTY

Sitting next to his aunt, with his arm on the back of her chair, Harry, after a cough or two and a furtive look at Kenneth, began to unfold his plan. He wanted to invite five or six swells to his house across the way, he said. He had thought of it when he was a boy and spent a vacation with Tom Haynes in Kentucky. Tom had had one the fall before and so had another comrade, and when they heard of his big house untenanted, they said it was just the place "to paint red," off there in the country, where no one could be disturbed with their nightly revels, or threaten them with the police, as had once been done.

"I told them the house was scarcely habitable," he said, "and that only made them the fiercer. It would be like camping out, and they are resolved to come."

"And do they still think us 'niggers'?" Kenneth asked, remembering Hal's letter.

"Oh, pshaw!" was Harry's laughing reply. "That was all a joke. Tom and the rest of 'em know you are a rising doctor, and that uncle and aunt are the nicest old couple in the world. Aren't you, Aunt Mary?"

He had his arm around her neck, and was looking at her with the soft, pleading eyes to which she always yielded.

"What is it you want me to do?" she asked, and he replied:

"I shall get some women to clean up the house, and some one to cook for us. I did think of getting old Polly,—father's nurse, you know,—but she has broken her hip, and none of the other Morris darkies want to come, so I must have some one else, and if you will overlook them a little and keep them going, and—and—if I could put up some cots in the ball-room, it would seem more like a picnic. Are you willing?"

He was smoothing Mrs. Stannard's hair and caressing her arm, while he waited for her to answer.

"The ball-room is pretty dirty now, and there are twelve windows to wash," she said, at last.

"Oh, that's nothing. None of the boys will care if the windows are covered with cobwebs, and I'll get a woman to clean it up. You shall not be troubled at all. Now give in, like a dear old auntie."

She gave in as he knew she would, but the deacon objected. Six young fellows sleeping in one room would raise "old Harry" and keep him awake nights, he said, but he was finally overruled, as his wife had been. Hal guaranteed that the "old Harry" should not be raised, and that his guests should go to their cots in their stocking feet, and up the stairs which lead to the ball-room from the outside. Two or three of the steps were broken, but he would get them mended. In fact, he would do all he could to spare his aunt, who was again assured that she was the dearest old auntie in the world and the assurance emphasized with a kiss.

Kenneth did not like the arrangement at all. Six young men of Harry's stamp coming to "paint the town red" were not desirable neighbors, even if they did go up the outside stairs to bed in their stocking feet. But they were coming. His mother had given her consent, and she went herself to superintend the cleaning of the house and the settling it, as far as Hal wanted it settled. Nothing but chairs, a lounge or two, a dining-room table and one or two smaller tables were necessary, besides the kitchen furniture, he said. The bareness of the rooms would suit them far better than if they were luxuriously furnished. They would not be in them a great deal except at meal-time and possibly evenings. They were going to hunt and fish and row and drive, and perhaps go for a day to Rocky Point, where there were one or two choice spirits like themselves, Hal said. He was very happy in his preparations, which went on rapidly, so that within a week the shut-up house had assumed quite a festive air, with the furniture Hal thought necessary, and the furniture his aunt insisted upon, and some of which was brought from her own house. Among other articles were curtains and rugs and two or three easy chairs, and a mirror which had been her mother's.

"If that comes back whole I shall be glad," Kenneth said. "Better leave it where it is?"

"Comes back whole," his mother repeated. "What kind of folks do you think are coming to smash looking-glasses? They are all gentlemen,—'first cut,' Harry says."

Kenneth laughed. When studying with Dr. Cath-

erin in Rocky Point he had met Hal's choice spirits, and had heard of a party given by one of them, and that at its close two of the number were on the floor and nearly every dish on the table broken. But he would not tell this to his mother, who seemed rather proud that Hal's fine friends were coming to visit her, as she seemed to think they were. She had no respect for Hal's father, but she had a vast amount of respect for the Morris family, and had always looked upon Hal as a little superior to herself, because he belonged to it.

"Let him have a play spell in his own house if he wants to, and you jine in when you can," she said to Kenneth, who answered that as there was an unusual amount of sickness in town, as well as in Rocky Point, where he was now called in Dr. Catherin's absence, he should not have much time to spend at the Morris house. He should, of course, be polite to Harry's guests, and do what he could to make it pleasant for them.

With this his mother was content. She had been very busy, going many times a day across the road to see that the women hired from Millville were doing their work right, and herself washing the twelve windows of the ball-room, where the six cots were set up, giving it the look of a hospital ward, Kenneth said. Hal liked it and was in high spirits. Five had accepted his invitation, and were coming the next day. There was Tom Haynes from Lexington and Jim Drake from Louisville. There was George and Charlie Browne, brothers, from Boston, and Peter Pond, from he hardly knew where, except that he was

English, and a big swell with plenty of money. He did not know him personally, but the Brownes did, and vouched for him, and that was enough.

These were the five young men who landed at the Millville station on a summer morning in July. Hal was there to meet them with two open carriages, and the greetings were rather boisterous as four of them seized Harry's hand, calling him "Old Boy" and introducing the stranger as "Peter the Great." He was a little dapper man, whose head was far too large for his small body, and whose light summer attire was faultless. He wore a monocle part of the time, and at once made use of it to look at Harry, assuring him that he intended to enjoy himself immensely. They were a jolly set, and the people near the station came to their doors to look at them as they talked and laughed and collected their dressing-cases, hand-bags, fishing tackle, guns, gymnasium clubs, a guitar, a violin and a mandolin, and two boxes marked "Glass," all of which were piled into an express wagon which Harry called up.

"Now for Liberty Hall," they said, as they took their seats in the carriage, giving, as they drove off, a college yell, the loud "Rah-rah-rah's" making the people watching them wonder if they were crazy, and how the deacon and his wife would stand them for a week if they continued as noisy as they had commenced.

The deacon wondered, too, when he saw them alight and heard their shouts and jokes as they looked about them.

"I don't know for sure, but I guess we or'to go over

and welcome 'em. They are not exactly our company, but they are Hal's," Mrs. Stannard said to the deacon, urging him until, against his will, he started with her across the street.

Hal did not see them coming, but Charlie Browne did, and said to him, "Look, you are going to have a call. Who are the old coves coming up the walk?"

In a moment young Browne saw his mistake in Harry's face, which was scarlet. He had wondered what his city friends would think of his uncle and aunt, of whom in his heart he was ashamed. Still if he had his house party he must have his uncle and aunt, too, and he had prepared the way somewhat by explaining that they were old-fashioned people of the pure New England type, but the best and kindest-hearted couple in the world. And here was Charlie Browne, the toniest one of the lot, calling them "old coves" and asking who they were. Rallying all the manhood there was in him, he answered curtly: "Those 'old coves' are my uncle and aunt, Deacon and Mrs. Stannard, the best people on earth, and worth half a dozen such cads as I am."

"By George, I've put my foot in it," Charlie said to himself, but he was equal to the emergency. "Of course. I just glanced at them. I see now, and they are the counterparts of my grandfather and grandmother. I shall be glad to know them."

The deacon and his wife were in the hall by this time and being presented to the young men, who, having heard of Charlie's blunder, smothered their laugh in time to be very gracious, declaring themselves delighted to meet Hal's uncle and aunt, whom

they hoped to know more intimately. Mrs. Stannard was completely won over, hoping they would be comfortable, and telling them if they wanted anything to call upon her. As she was leaving, her eye fell upon the two boxes marked "Glass."

"For pity's sake," she said, in a loud whisper to Harry. "If they hain't brought their looking-glass with 'em! There warn't an atom of need. I sent one over, you know, and could send another as well as not. Better not undo 'em if they are nicely packed."

If Hal's face had been scarlet when his aunt was called an "old cove," it was purple now. He knew what was in the boxes, and that the sight of it would shock the old lady, who was the strongest kind of a W. C. T. U. A lie in what he thought a good cause was nothing to him, and getting her gradually to the door, he said: "It is not a mirror. It is Warner's Safe Cure, which Tom has to take."

"Oh," his aunt rejoined, looking commisseratingly at Tom, who stood with his back to her, shaking with laughter. "Is it kidney? I have a splendid recipe for that, better than forty Warner's; or maybe the doctor can give him something."

"Yes, yes. I'll let you know," Hal said, getting rid of her as soon as possible.

Then he turned to his companions and found the hall empty. The mirror and kidney business had been the last straw, and the young men had hurried through the rear door of the hall out upon the grounds, where four of them were holding their sides, and "Peter the Great," or "Little Pondy," as he was more often called, was hopping up and down, first

on one foot then upon the other, with his monocle, which had dropped from his eye, swinging in front of him like a pendulum.

"Rich!" he said. "I am beginning to enjoy myself immensely. Would she turn us out bag and baggage if she knew it was 'Oh-be-joyful'?"

"Not from my house," Hal answered, with an air of proprietorship; "but she is a strict temperance woman, and we'd better not let her know, if we can help it."

Pondy, to whom the wine belonged, and who was the fastest of the set and the least of a gentleman, notwithstanding his wealth, looked askance. Dinner without wine would hardly be dinner, though he might perhaps get along with beer and visit the boxes afterward.

"The old lady will let me have beer, won't she?" he asked.

"You mean my aunt, Mrs. Stannard?" Hal said, with a great deal of dignity, for the "old lady" offended him.

Pondy saw it and hastened to say: "Certainly, I beg your pardon. I mean your aunt, of course. It was a slip of the tongue. If you think best we'll put the boxes in the cellar, where we can take a private nip now and then, and on our last night have the bottles up with a regular blow out. What do you say, boys?"

Instantly there went up a cheer for Little Pondy and the private nips.

"Won't be much left for a blow-out," Tom said, "but I vote we put the stuff in the cellar."

It did not take long to carry the boxes there and unpack the bottles and uncork one of them for the little nips, which Pondy took on the spot, to sample it, he said. As they emerged from the cellar Kenneth came into the hall. He had been visiting some patients a few miles away and just returned. If the young men had been inclined to make fun of the "old coves," they had no such idea with regard to the fine-looking man whom Hal introduced as "My cousin, Dr. Stannard."

They were expecting to see a common country doctor, and were not prepared for the ease and dignity with which Kenneth met them.

He did not say he was glad to see them, but he was courteous and polite, and said he hoped they would enjoy themselves.

"Thanks," little Pondy replied. "We are going to enjoy ourselves immensely."

This enjoying himself immensely was his favorite expression, used on all occasions, and to all appearance he did enjoy himself as the days went on, especially after a visit to the cellar and the little nip which he took oftener than his companions thought good for him. "The painting red," which had been predicted, was mostly done in the house, for as a rule the young men were very quiet outside, especially on the two occasions when they went to the village and sat upon the steps of the hotel, "the dryest place he ever saw," little Pondy said, after trying the bar and finding nothing stronger than Vichy, Apollinaris and Soda Water. He had ordered ale from Rocky Point, and with this and visits to the cellar, in which his com-

panions sometimes joined, he managed to enjoy himself. There were long drives in the country and sails and fishing on the pond and hunting in the woods, and the young men wore colored shirts and sweaters and big hats, and sometimes had their sleeves rolled up and shirt collars open and looked like anything but swells.

Two or three times Mrs. Stannard questioned Tom as to his improvement with Warner's Cure, and once suggested that he give Kenneth's pills a trial, or her recipe, which had cured the deacon of the worst kind of kidney trouble. With the utmost gravity Tom assured her that Warner was doing wonders for him, and told her that if there was a drawback he would try her recipe.

"Well-mannered young men, if they do look like tramps in their old clothes when they come in from fishin' and huntin'," she said to Kenneth, "but I don't like their smokin' all the time; why, I've actually seen it come out of the parlor winder when they are all at it. 'Tain't good for 'em, and you or'to tell 'em so."

Kenneth shook his head and said: "Better let the smoke alone. If they do nothing worse than that I shall be glad."

He knew about the boxes in the cellar. The joke was too good for little Pondy to keep, and he had let it out, declaring the fun "immense," and asking Kenneth to take a "nip" with him. It was not often that Kenneth joined them. He was too busy during the day, and in the evening too tired, he said, when his mother urged him to go over and call. He did

go once or twice, and found them playing cards for small stakes, drinking beer and smoking until the room was blue and he could scarcely breathe.

They asked him to take a hand and a drink, or a pipe, as he preferred, but he declined all three, and after sitting awhile, took his leave without a very strong invitation to stay from any of the party.

"He's no fun at all; don't smoke, nor play, nor drink, nor enjoy himself," Pondy said, after Kenneth had gone, and yet in his little soul he felt how infinitely superior to himself Kenneth was, and much the same feeling permeated the crowd, each one of whom felt under restraint when he was with them, and relieved at his absence.

They had followed Hal's instructions, and were very quiet when at midnight they stole up the outside stairs to their cots in the ball-room. Once, when little Pondy had enjoyed himself too much, he plunged into bed with his clothes on, but was promptly dragged out and made to undress, while he kept saying thickly, "I don't—call—this—enshoying my—shelf by a —— shight." After that he kept pretty straight in the ball-room, with the exception of once smoking in bed and setting fire to the sheets. The blaze was extinguished, and as the sheets belonged to Hal, they were taken away, and Mrs. Stannard never knew how near she came to a conflagration. The next morning Pondy complained of a headache, the result, he said, of certain hard blows aimed, he supposed, at the burning sheets, but which by accident missed fire and hit him. A drive would do him good. Not a noisy thing like those they had taken in a carryall, when they had

sung college songs and given college yells, which made the people think they were lunatics on their way to the asylum. He'd like a quiet drive with Charlie Browne, after that pretty little bay mare he'd seen going in and out of the deacon's yard.

"*Con,* I heard the doctor call her. That's a funny name for a horse. His girl's, maybe," and he looked at Harry, who did not reply at once.

He knew the reason for the horse's name and respected Kenneth's confidence so far as not to speak of it to his friends, and especially to Pondy, who had made so many boasts of his conquests.

"And I don't care for a soul of 'em, except one," he had said, "and I shouldn't care for her if she hadn't sat down on me and called me an insolent little cur when I made some advances to her she didn't like; tried to take her hand, you know, when we were riding in a diligence near Spezzia after dark."

"Served you right! Who is she? What's her name?" was asked, but Pondy shook his head.

"Sha'n't tell," he said, "till we have our blow-out and finish Warner's Safe Cure. Then we'll each drink to the prettiest girl we ever saw."

Spying Kenneth just then in the yard, he went out to him and asked for the bay mare for a short drive with Charlie.

"Sha'n't be gone much over an hour. Head aches, and I want some exercise."

Kenneth hesitated a moment. This was the first favor any of the party had asked of him. Con had nothing to do that day, as he was to make his calls on his wheel. It seemed ungracious not to let her go,

and he finally consented, with sundry charges as to her treatment.

"No whip; no urging, as she is very free, and needs holding back even when going up hill," he said.

"All right, I'll be careful of her as if she were your girl," Pondy replied, with a laugh, as he drove from the yard with Charlie Browne beside him.

Two hours later, when Kenneth came back from his calls, Pondy had not returned. Half an hour went by and he was beginning to feel anxious, when there was the sound of fast-coming wheels and Con came swiftly up the steep hill, her head held high, her eyes and nostrils extended and her sides covered with flecks of white foam.

"I tell you, she's a 'corker,'" Pondy said, as he fell rather than stepped from the buggy. "I'm mush oblige, an' have 'joyed myshelf 'mensely."

"Which is more than can be said of the horse. What did you do to her?" Kenneth answered, as he began to unharness the trembling animal, who rubbed her head against his arm with a low whinney, as if she would tell him what had been done.

Pondy saw he was offended, and began, in a half-tipsy way, to explain that he had done nothing but chirp to her a little and pull the reins, and once hit her a cut just to see how fast she could go, "and, by Shorge, couldn't schtop her at all; went up hill an' down as if the devil was behind her!" he said.

"As I think he was," Kenneth replied, leading the horse to the stable, followed by Charlie Browne, who used some strong language with regard to Pondy. "Took with him a bottle of whiskey," he said, "and

soon became a drivelling fool, urging the horse to her utmost speed, and finally gave her a smart cut with the whip. After that there was no restraining her, and she came home like the wind, a distance of ten miles from where they turned round, making in all a twenty mile drive in little over two hours on one of the hottest days in summer."

This was Charlie's account, and after he left, Kenneth stayed a long time with his horse, rubbing her down and talking to her as if she could understand what he said and know he was indignant. And every tender, loving word he said to her and every caress he gave her was more for the Connie over the sea than for her. He called her Connie two or three times, and wondered what the real Connie would think of the house-party, and especially of Pondy.

The "blow-out" was to come off the next night; the last of the young men's stay at the Corners. Two choice spirits from Rocky Point had been invited and had accepted. Kenneth was also included in the invitations and wanted to decline, but thought better of it, and at eight, the appointed hour, presented himself at the Morris house, where he found the young men in evening dress and looking very different from the tramps his mother had called them when they came from hunting and fishing, in their sweaters and big hats. A caterer had been hired from Millville, with orders to do his best, and the table was laid with handsome linen and china and glasses, three at each plate, showing that the "nips" held out, or more had been bought, and were to form a prominent part of the dinner. There were ten courses, and Pondy, who

had insisted upon bearing all the expense and was master of ceremonies, had ordered that they be served very slowly, as he wished the festivities prolonged until after midnight. He was enjoying himself immensely as usual, and for a time kept pretty sober, never even raising his eyebrows, and only saying under his breath to the man on his right hand, "*Chacun a son goût*," when Kenneth turned down his glass as the wine was offered him.

It flowed pretty freely with the others, and by the time the tenth course was served there were plenty of corks and empty bottles lying round, and Pondy could scarcely sit straight in his chair. The caterer had finished his work and was packing his dishes in the kitchen, while one or two waiters lingered in the dining-room, when Pondy, scarcely knowing what he was doing, began: "Ladiesh and shentlemen. No, I meansh shentlemen. We have enshoyed ourshelves immenshly, and now we comsh to the feasth of reashon and flow of—of— What do you call the d—— shtuff?"

"Wine," some one suggested, and he went on: "Yesh, wine; but that don't sound like it, but wine ish better to drink the healths of our prettiest girl. Doc, you sthart her, and if you don't like wine, take water, only drink. Here you, waitah, fill high glasch."

"In my profession I see so many pretty girls that I do not like to make a choice, so I pass," Kenneth said, laughingly.

"All right, *Chacun a son goût* again," Pondy replied, while the other young men, one after another,

gave the name of some girl and drank to her health.

"My turn now, and I shall beat the crowd," Pondy said, rising from his chair, and steadying himself between it and the table. "Get up, pleash," he continued, "we must drink to her shtanding, and fill to the brim; here, waitah."

The glasses were filled, and the men stood up, the two from Rocky Point holding on to the table, as they were rather shaky by this time.

"Now, one, two, three, and here she goesh," Pondy said, and then rang out loud and clear, "Miss Consthance Elliott."

There was a crash, a broken glass and water spilled over the cloth, while Kenneth's face was white as death.

"Hallo, what's the row? Have I sthruck your girl? Do you know her?" Pondy asked, while his companions stood staring at Kenneth with their wine untouched.

"I know her, yes; she is, or was, my father's ward," Kenneth replied, his voice trembling with the indignation he felt at hearing Connie's name on the lips of the little drunken jackanapes, who answered: "Then you know a deuced pretty girl, if she did call me an insholent cur."

"Oh," a chorus of voices chimed in, as the guests put down their glasses and resumed their seats. "So she is the girl who snubbed you. Tell us about it and where you met her."

"Either the mention of Connie, or the threatening look in Kenneth's eyes, partially sobered Pondy, who replied more naturally than he had been talking for some time.

"I met her in France and Italy. She was with her aunt, a hawk-eyed woman, and I didn't think either of 'em hankered for my company. But, 'pon my shoul, the girl was such a shtunner that I would keep with 'em. I'd heard American girls were eashy going, and once in a diligence, when I shat next to her and it wash darkish, and her bare hand lay on her lap, looking so white and shoft, I just touched it, kinder friendly, you know, to shee what she would do. I'd held another girl's hand five minutes, or more, but, my Lord! I believe thish one would have throttled me on the shpot if there had not been others in the diligence and she hated a schene. She never spoke to me again, and her aunt forbade my speaking to either of them. All the shame, she's a beauty, and a catch for some of you chaps. Plenty of tin, they shay. Here's to her health! Constance Elliott."

He drank it alone, with the exception of the two choice spirits from Rocky Point. The rest of the party were watching Kenneth, whose fists were clenched and whose eyes were blazing with anger. He, however, sat still while the hilarity went on, and songs were sung and stories told and college yells were given and cigars and pipes were smoked and wine was drank, until Pondy was beside himself, and by way of emphasizing his good time threw his glass across the room at Mrs. Stannard's mirror. The noise seemed to intensify his enjoyment and make him wild. A second glass went after the first, and a third would have followed if Harry and Charlie Browne had not interfered.

Taking advantage of this diversion, Kenneth left

the feast, which lasted till after midnight. In the morning, when the sun looked into the dining-room at the Morris house, it saw broken blottles and wine glasses and stained linen and the one-hundred-year-old mirror, with scarcely a whole piece in it. Pondy, who had grown unmanageable, had again made it his target, calling it sometimes the "old lady" and again the "W. C. T. U." At last, when there was nothing more in his reach to throw, he fell out of his chair under the table, where his comrades left him after several ineffectual efforts to get him up.

"Lem-me-be," he said. "I'm 'joying myshelf 'mensely, and I won't go home till morning. Wha's that doctor? He didn't like my squeezin' the girl's hand. Three sheers for her."

He tried to give the cheers, but they died in his throat, and he was soon sleeping like a log, his last words being, "G'way, I'm 'joying myshelf 'mensely."

About nine o'clock seven shame-faced young men packed up their belongings and departed, after offering to pay Mrs. Stannard for the loss of her mirror. But she declined with some spirit. She had looked upon the scene of the carousal with wide-eyed consternation.

"I thought they was gentlemen, and 'stead of that they was rowdies," she said, as she took all there was left of her mirror and carried it home, a sadder and wiser woman.

It had belonged to her grandmother, and money could not pay for it; neither could the long, handsome, gilt-framed mirror which came to her within a week from Pondy quite replace it. But it did a

good deal towards it. He had been profuse in his apologies, and his companions had denounced him to her as a fool and idiot, with whom they were through. And she had agreed with them until the expensive mirror came, when she weakened a little in his favor, saying she presumed it did not take as much to affect him as it did the others. He was a small man, and very little would upset him. It was a great shock to her to know that Warner's Safe Cure was wine, and that Harry had helped to drink it, and nothing but his promise to sign the pledge availed to comfort her. He stayed at home two or three weeks after his house party, and seemed most of the time to be in a brown study. No reference was made by either Kenneth or himself to Connie until the day before he started for Boston. Then he asked, with apparent indifference: "By the way, Ken, do you know where that girl is whose health that puppy drank?"

"You mean Connie?" Kenneth said; and Hal replied, "Yes, Connie Elliott. Is she still abroad?"

Kenneth supposed so, although they rarely heard from her.

"She is quite an heiress, isn't she?" was Harry's next question.

"She will be if the mine in which she has a good deal of stock begins to pay, as it may," Kenneth replied, and there the conversation ended, and the next day Harry left for Boston, telling his aunt he was going to buckle down to hard work and make something of himself, and some money, too, which he needed badly.

CHAPTER X

AT INTERLAKEN

It was just a year after the blow-out, and near the close of a lovely afternoon among the Alps, whose tall peaks cut the sky like needles in some points and again spread out in a broad snow-clad surface, glistening in the sunshine like flames of fire, and shining like a sea of glass. Along the mountain road which leads from Interlaken to Lauterbrunnen two young people were slowly walking. They had been out for two or three miles, and were returning to the little village over which the Jungfrau keeps watch. They had turned aside from the principal thoroughfare into a circuitous path by the side of a brook which, fed by the glaciers above, went rippling over stones with a musical sound, very soothing in that quiet spot and at that hour of the day. Behind them as they walked was the great mountain which greets you at so many points in Switzerland, and nowhere more cheerily than in the vicinity of Interlaken. Before them were the roofs of the town, while across the fields came the tinkle of the cow bells and faintly in the distance was the echo of an Alpine horn, blown for the benefit of some tourists. It was just the hour and place for love making, and that something of this kind was in progress was evident in the faces of the young couple.

He was a handsome young man, with dark hair and eyes, and a voice and smile which seldom failed to win the hearts of strangers. The girl was like a lovely flower, tall and slender, blue eyed and fair, but with a troubled look upon her face and in her eyes, on whose long lashes tears were standing. There had been a pause in their walk just where the brook made a dash over a pile of rocks and fell with a splash into the basin below. Here on a huge bowlder they sat and exchanged vows the nature of which the girl did not understand, except that they bound her to the man who had power to thrill her every nerve and make her as clay in his hands.

Connie, for it was she, had seen much of the world in one way, but was still a child in another, trusting with her whole soul where she trusted and seeing no fault in those she loved. Her close convent life had kept her ignorant of many things it might have been well for her to know. For a year or more she had been free from the restraint of school and had travelled from place to place with her aunt, doing everywhere the same thing,—a little sight-seeing, a good deal of shopping, and driving, dressing for *table-d'hôte,* where she met the same people night after night and heard the same flow of gossip. Told repeatedly how beautiful she was, sought in marriage, by some whose advances she felt to be an insult, and flattered by all till she was tired of it and longed for some quiet place where there was no sham and everything was real. Many times her thoughts had turned to the farmhouse with a longing to go there again,

and her heart always beat faster when she recalled the moonlit evening when she sat with Kenneth on the stone wall and said things to him she would scarcely dare say now that she was older. That she did not hear from the Stannards often was her own fault, for her letters were always promptly answered. She had been so busy in school and since, and she disliked letter writing.

She was nearly twenty-two and her own mistress now, with no need to call upon the deacon and no necessity for writing, except for friendship's sake. But somehow the farmhouse and its inmates, and especially Kenneth, were very distinct in her mind as she walked with this young man, who held her hand as if he had a right to it, and was not spurned as Pondy had been when he touched it in the diligence. He had come into her life at Lucerne, just when she was sick of everything and disgusted with a persistent offer of marriage from a sleepy-eyed Count Costello, many years her senior. She disliked him and was glad when a new comer, over whom the young girls in the hotel were raving, sought her from all the rest. From the first her aunt, who favored Costello and a title, had set her face against him, but it did not matter. Love's fire was kindled and the light and warmth were very sweet to the trusting, innocent girl. Her lover had followed her to Interlaken, where their acquaintance ripened fast, and they were taking their last walk together, for early the next morning he was to leave for Paris, where friends were awaiting him.

"Remember," he said, as they neared the hotel, "it is till death do us part."

"Yes, till death do us part," she replied, wondering why there came such a tightness about her heart, as if a cold hand had clutched it.

He bade her good-bye that night, after dinner in one of the shadowy corners of the big hotel.

"Remember," he said again, and raised her hand to his lips.

Through the leaves of a climbing vine the moonbeams filtered and fell upon her face which he would like to have kissed, but something restrained him, and afterward, when the awakening came, Connie thanked God that it was so.

"I will remember," she said, withdrawing her hand, just as round the corner came the rustle of skirts and Mrs. Hart appeared in view, with Count Costello in attendance, smirking into her face just as he had smirked in Connie's six weeks ago.

Something in their looks smote Connie like a blow, making her sick at heart, and she walked away and left them alone. The next morning, when the early stage left the hotel, a pair of soft, blue eyes looked eagerly up at a window from which a white hand was waving an adieu. Then the stage rolled away, and Connie was alone with the memory of what had been and was soon to be again in its full fruition, she believed. That morning her aunt had said to her: "I am glad he has gone. I never liked him, and I read people pretty well. I have no doubt you attracted him, but it was your money he wanted. Give him a plainer face with more money, and he would take it."

"Money!" Connie repeated. "I am sick of the sound, and I certainly have not enough to make me an object for fortune-hunters. I wish you would manage to have people, and even him, think me poor; then I shall know who likes me for myself."

Her aunt made no reply, but that afternoon she wrote a letter to Paris, which was to bear early fruit. Meanwhile the days passed with the usual round of nothings for Connie, who tired of them all. Old men and young plied her with attentions, which she received graciously, but coldly, biding her time and counting the days which must elapse before she heard from him, or he came back to claim her. But he neither came nor wrote, except a few lines from Paris, saying that he had reached there safely and was with his friends at the Grand. Mrs. Hart had not intended to stop much longer in Interlaken, but she kept lingering, declaring herself infatuated with the place and seemingly infatuated with Count Costello, who had transferred his attentions from the niece to the aunt. Every day Connie waited anxiously for the western mails, but only to be disappointed, and the bright color began to fade from her cheeks, and the lustre from her eyes. Twice she walked out to the boulder by the brook, and sitting down upon it, tried to recall every word he had said to her and what she had said to him. Once she knelt by the rock and prayed that he might come, but God, who knew better than she what was for her good, did not answer her prayer, and her eyes grew larger and more sunken, and her figure lost its symmetrical proportions, until

her aunt awoke to the fact that her health was failing. Thinking heroic treatment the best, she one day said abruptly: "If you are pining for that young man, you may as well give him up. The Count has friends in Paris, who write that your friend is there, leading a gay life and very devoted to a young lady of the party."

After that Connie drooped more and more, until by the time they left Interlaken for Geneva her life seemed to have gone from her, leaving her a pale, silent girl, with a hopeless look in her eyes pitiful to see in one so young. Absolutely true herself, and a child in many things, owing to her convent training, it was hard to imagine deception in any one whom she trusted, and doubly so in him who, if he were alive and well, had deceived her cruelly. She might write to him, for she knew his address, but she was too proud to do that. If he had ceased to care for her, she would make no sign and bear her pain as best she could. Geneva was a little diversion, as she was never tired of the beautiful lake, or of watching the lights and shadows of Mt. Blanc in the distance. She would like to have stayed there all the autumn, but her aunt said no,—her health required the balmy air of Genoa, where Costello had invited them to stop at his palace.

"Oh, auntie," Connie cried in dismay, "you surely will not go there!"

"Why not?" was the sharp question, and Connie replied:

"It does not seem proper for two lone women to become the guests of Count Costello, when there are so many hotels and pensions in Genoa."

"I shall not go as his guest, but as his wife," was the rejoinder.

"His wife! You? Oh, auntie!" and Connie sprang to her feet, and then sank pale and trembling into her chair.

She knew her aunt's fondness for titles, and had seen her growing intimacy with the count, but had never quite believed that it would come to this, that her proud aunt would take one whom she had refused. It was strange, but like many another foolish woman, Mrs. Hart had been won by the glamor of a title and the oily tongue of the Italian, who boasted connection with some of the first families in Italy and Florence. He had a villa in the latter city and a palace in Genoa, and when his wife tired of these, there was her house in New York, where they could spend a portion of each year. Mrs. Hart was a handsome, well-preserved woman of forty-five. The count was only a year or two her junior. He had no bad habits that she knew of, and was very good tempered. He had been devoted to Connie, but had seen the folly of aspiring to the hand of one so young. Mrs. Hart, in her maturity, would suit him better, and be an ornament in the high circles to which he would introduce her. These and similar arguments prevailed, and after yards and yards of "red tape," the marriage ceremony was performed in Geneva some time in October, and Mrs. Hart was the Countess Costello.

It was a very kind, fatherly air which Costello assumed towards Connie, who, if there had been a spot upon earth to which she could flee, would not have gone with the newly-wedded pair. But there was

none except the farmhouse where she felt sure she would be welcome. But if she went to America she might lose her chance of hearing from *him,* and she had not yet given up all hope. She meant to stay in Europe and take her chance. The journey to Genoa was made very slowly, for the countess was not at all averse to showing herself as a countess to her countrymen at different hotels, and the count was in no hurry to reach his palace. He was very happy at Monte Carlo, where he played for high stakes, winning some and losing more, and asking his bride to pay his losses, as he was a little short of funds. She paid them, as well as some of their hotel bills, and said nothing. She was a countess. Her marriage had been heralded in the New York papers, and commented upon as one more instance of a fair American winning a title from all foreign competitors. Costello was a devoted husband, and she was happy and rather anxious to reach the palace of which she was to be mistress. The count had told her that it was a good deal run down and lacked the cheery air of American houses, and he would have given orders to have it repaired if he had not thought she would rather see to it herself. She was free to do whatever she liked.

What Mrs. Hart had in her mind she hardly knew. Certainly not the tall, gloomy house on one of the dark streets of Genoa, so narrow that as you look ahead the buildings seem almost to touch each other.

"Oh, is it here?" she whispered under her breath, as the carriage stopped at the door and the count said, very gayly:

"Here we are, my dear. Home at last."

It was something that a lackey in faded livery came out to meet them, while old Annunciata, who had been in the family for years as head servant, curtesied nearly to the floor to her new mistress. It was November and the wind was blowing cold through the street, where no sunlight ever fell, and Mrs. Hart was chilled to the bones, while Connie was shaking from her head to her feet. But there were fires in the salon and in the bedrooms, and the count ordered hot tea and biscuits and claret to be sent to the ladies, whose disappointment he read in their faces.

"The villa in Florence is not like this. Wait till we get there," he said, bustling about and trying to make them comfortable.

When she had drank her tea and was warm, Mrs. Hart began to look around her with some curiosity. Everything was old and faded, but rich in its way, and telling of a past when the Costellos held their heads among the best in the city. The count had not deceived her in that respect. His palace might be no better than a barn, but his family, though poor, was all he had represented it to be. He, too, was very kind, and in his own house assumed a dignity he had before lacked. A few of his acquaintances called, and were especially kind to Connie, who, had she chosen, might have been a belle in the Costello society, but she disliked the Italians. She disliked Genoa and the dark, dull old house, with the punctilious etiquette the count required from his wife and herself and his three servants, who were required to do the work of six. Occasionally she had bits of news

from the outside world, but no letter reached her, and she ceased at last to expect one. Deserted, was the bitter thought always present with her, and the soft air of Italy failed to bring back the color to her cheeks and the brightness to her eyes, and thus the winter wore on until March, when they went to Florence, where they found the Costello villa in better repair than the palace in Genoa had been. There were many Americans in the city, and Connie always scanned them curiously, hoping for a face she never found, either there or elsewhere during the summer, a part of which was spent in Paris and a part in Switzerland, but not at Interlaken. The countess did not care to go there, and for Connie there were so many sad memories connected with it that she loathed the thought of seeing it again. The count was fond of travel, and as his wife's money held out they moved from place to place during the autumn and winter, until the first of February found them again in Genoa, nearly a year after they had left it.

Old Annunciata and her husband had been left to keep the house in their mistress's absence, and welcomed the family back. Annunciata, who could manage a little English, was very fond of Connie, and had given special care to the arrangement of her room, which, she said, had been thoroughly cleansed in every nook and corner, even to moving the big clothespress, a thing which did not often happen. "And under it I found this," she said, handing Connie a newspaper, which must have come nearly a year before, just after the family went to Florence, and by some mischance had been dropped on the floor and

pushed under the press, where it lay until Annunciata's cleaning brought it to light. It was a London paper, addressed in a strange hand, sent first to her Paris address, 7 Rue Scribe, from which place it had been forwarded to her at Genoa. It did not seem to contain anything of interest as she glanced over its pages. Then her eyes fell upon a few lines with a faint pencil mark around them, and she read that on January 15th there was married in St. George's Church, Hanover Square, Charles H. Morris, of Boston, Mass., to Miss Catherine Haynes, of Lexington, Kentucky, U. S. A.

It was a simple announcement of a year ago, and did not affect Connie at all as she read it, wondering who the parties were and why a notice of their marriage should be sent to her and by whom. Haynes was a new name, while Morris seemed familiar, and suddenly she remembered where she had heard it, and the Morris house at The 4 Corners came back to her, with Kenneth, who had told her of his cousin. This Charles H. might be the same. She had never met him and did not know he was in Europe, nor did it matter. His marriage was nothing to her. And yet there was something about that notice which kept her looking at it, while thoughts of the farmhouse and Kenneth and the old couple crowded her brain with an intense longing to see them again.

"And why not?" she asked herself. "I am my own mistress. Why should I stay in this dreary place when there is America, so large and bright and free? My aunt is seemingly happy with her new home and husband. She will not miss me much, and there is

no reason why I should not go," she thought, and she at once communicated her wish to her aunt, who opposed it strongly, while the count was still more vehement in his opposition, and it was this which decided her at last.

Alone with her he expressed himself more fully, saying that the sight of her fair young face made his home brighter than it would otherwise be, and he could not let her go. He offered no endearment, only his eyes told what he felt, and Connie turned from him in disgust, resolved now upon her future course. She would take her maid, who was a French girl, with her to Paris, leave her there, sail alone from Havre to New York, and go at once to the Stannards, if they would have her. From this nothing could dissuade her, neither her aunt's protests nor the count's soft, pleading words, which made her more determined than ever to get away from a place she hated. She was going to America, and before her aunt fully realized the fact she had left Genoa, and the first ship bound for New York which sailed from Havre in March took her with it,—a white-faced, lone girl, who was sick most of the time, but comforted herself with the thought that she was going home to America and the farmhouse and Kenneth. He was the central figure, whom she always saw in the foreground and through whom comfort would somehow come. She had no doubt of her welcome, and within an hour after she reached New York and her hotel, she sent a telegram to Kenneth, saying:

"Arrived on steamer this morning. Shall be at Millville station to-night. CONNIE."

CHAPTER XI

CONNIE'S ARRIVAL

March that year came in like a roaring lion, and continued to roar at intervals for two weeks, when it gathered its forces together for a farewell which should outdo all that had gone before. For three days the storm continued, until the tops of the fences were covered and roads were cut through the fields in some places, as the highways were blocked with drifts. And still the snow fell in great billowy clouds, which the wind drove before it through the valleys and over the hills of Millville. Nearly all day Kenneth had been gone, as he had been called in consultation with Dr. Catherin at Rocky Point, and it was not until five o'clock that he reached home, where he found Connie's telegram.

"Coming to-night on the six o'clock train, which is sure to be late," he exclaimed, with a thrill of delight, and no thought of the trouble it would be to meet her.

"Father will go to the train, you are so tired," his mother said, but had he been ten times as fatigued as he was, Kenneth would not have foregone the pleasure of meeting Connie.

"The house is as warm as it can be," he said, felicitating himself upon the fact that there was now a

furnace in the cellar, with sundry other modern improvements since Connie was there.

Some of the fireplaces had been stopped up, but one was left open in the sitting-room to please his father, and one in the guest-chamber to please him. It was here Connie had slept and sat on the hearth and held her little hands to the blaze, which she had liked. His mother, on receipt of the telegram, had opened the register in the room, and made it ready for her.

"Warm as toast," she said to Kenneth, when he inquired about it. But he insisted upon a fire in the fireplace, which he made himself, charging his mother to keep it bright until he returned with Connie.

The storm was awful at half-past five, when Kenneth went to harness his horses, Pro and Con, to the covered sleigh. Con, who had been to Rocky Point and back, did not like going out a second time, and showed her dislike by pulling back when Kenneth tried to lead her out.

"Easy, Con, easy! It's hard, I know, but Connie is coming, and I would sacrifice both you and Pro for her sake," he said, soothing the refractory animal, who, after a few protesting snorts, and throwing up of her head, squared herself to meet the storm, and went plunging through the drifts, dragging Pro after her, until the shelter was reached, where Kenneth left them until the train came in.

It was very late before it came puffing up to the station, looking like a huge snow bank, with the light from the frosty windows showing dimly through the darkness. All along the line of coaches Kenneth

looked anxiously, with a fear that she had not come, when the conductor appeared, and clinging to him was a slight form, which seemed to sway like a reed in the wind.

"Is Dr. Stannard here?" was shouted through the darkness, and "Aye, aye," came in response from Kenneth, as he sprang up the steps and passed his arms around the figure of the young girl.

"Connie?" he asked, as he could not see her face.

"Yes," she answered, clinging to him like a child.

"She's been bad all the way. I guess she's sick, or going to be," the conductor said, giving her up to Kenneth, who took her in his arms just as he had taken little Connie sixteen years before, when she came in her blue cloak and hood and crept into his heart.

As he had done then, so now he carried her to the sleigh and put her in and tucked the robes around her and took his seat beside her, and was out upon the road before a word was spoken. Then he said, "Connie, are you ill?"

She had sat in a drooping posture till now, when she straightened up, and moving a little nearer to him, she replied: "I don't know. I was sick on the ship, and I am so tired, and my head feels queer; but I am glad to be here. Are you glad? Is your mother glad?"

"Glad?" Kenneth repeated, and there was a world of tenderness in his voice as he drew Connie close to him and put her head upon his shoulder, where it lay through the drive home, which did not take long,

for Pro and Con, and especially the latter, defying the snow and the wind and the drifts, went swiftly up the hill, nearly upsetting the sleigh as they turned into a field, but finally reaching the house in safety.

Once during the drive Connie said, by way of explanation for her unexpected appearance: "I had to come. I couldn't stay in that dreary old palace in Genoa after Count Costello said words to me he never should have said. You know my aunt married him?"

Kenneth did know, but forebore to ask any questions, they were so near home.

"Oh, I am so glad, so glad!" Connie kept saying, when carried into the warmth and light, where Mrs. Stannard's motherly arms received her.

As his father took care of the horses, Kenneth removed Connie's hat and sack and gloves and chafed her cold hands, and thought how thin and pale she was, and how she sometimes rambled in her talk. She was not hungry, she said. She was only tired and sleepy. She did not sleep at all upon the ship. She did not think she had slept since she left Genoa, or for some time before. She would not eat, and Kenneth, who was watching her closely, advised his mother to take her to her room.

"Oh, this is so nice; this takes me back to long ago," Connie said, kneeling on the hearth when there, and holding her hands to the blaze just as Kenneth had seen her do when a child. "There are pictures in the fire," she continued; "pictures of me as I was a happy little girl and as I am now an unhappy woman," and she clasped her white hands together.

"Why are you unhappy? Has anything happened?" Mrs. Stannard asked, smoothing the soft golden hair on the small head, which was lying back against the cushions of a chair.

Connie looked at her a moment, and then told very briefly of Count Costello's offer to herself, of her refusal, of his marriage with her aunt, to whom she said he was kind; of the dreary house he called a palace, and of his saying to her: "Your young face is daily a painful contrast to that of the countess, handsome as she is."

"After that I could not stay, a foil to my aunt, who cares for him, while I hate him," she said, "and so I came here. Are you glad?"

She had asked the same question of Kenneth, who had answered by drawing her close to him, while his mother stooped and kissed her, as she replied: "Very glad; and now go to bed. You will be better to-morrow."

Connie had said nothing of the real pain eating into her heart, and Mrs. Stannard, while indignant at Count Costello, wondered why he should have had the power to change this once bright, rosy girl into the wan, pale woman who had scarcely strength to get into bed, and who, when there, looked almost as white as the pillow on which she was resting.

CHAPTER XII

CONNIE'S ILLNESS

It was a heavy, dreamless sleep which came to Connie that night, and when she woke at a late hour the next morning the storm was over, the sun was shining into the room, while Kenneth stood by her, counting her pulse. She tried to lift her head, but it fell back upon the pillow, as, with an effort to smile, she asked, "Am I going to be ill?"

"Not going to be. You are; but we will soon have you well," Kenneth replied, holding her hot hand a moment.

"Well, I'm glad I'm here. So glad!" Connie said, closing her eyes and falling asleep again, while Kenneth watched her anxiously.

It was past the middle of March when Connie came in the storm, and the early daffodils and crocuses were in bloom when she at last sat up and looked around her at a world which seemed so new. For weeks she had lain between life and death, stricken with fever which scorched her blood and stained her face a purple tint, so high it ran at times. From Rocky Point, Dr. Catherin came in consultation, and a specialist from Albany, while Kenneth kept his tireless watch at her side. At first she talked constantly,—sometimes of Count Costello and the dreary house in

Genoa, and again of something Kenneth could not understand, except that there was a *he* who must at some time have been closely mixed up in Connie's life. She never spoke his name, and Kenneth would not ask it, or question her, as she babbled on of the Jungfrau and the mountains and the bowlder by the brook and the moonlight nights among the Alps, in all of which *he* played a prominent part. Once he did say to her, "Where is he now?" and she answered, "Gone, gone."

In the very first of her illness she had kept repeating, "Glad, so glad," and they knew her gladness was because she was there. Then she forgot it, and now she took up the word "Gone," and rang change after change upon it, till Kenneth wanted to stop his ears to shut out the sound. After a little her mood changed, and she talked of the time she came to the farmhouse a little girl and played with the cats and Chance.

"Where are they?" she asked, with something like consciousness, and Kenneth told her that only six cats now ate in the wooden trough, and that Chance died long ago and was buried in the inclosure where they had their Christmas tree.

"Oh, yes, the tree!" she exclaimed, going over it with every detail, calling her own name and Chance's and Harry's, and finally Kenneth, who had nothing but herself.

"The best gift of all," Kenneth said, putting his cool hand on her hot forehead.

For a moment Connie looked at him with her great bright eyes, in which the tears slowly gathered.

"Brush them away," she said. "I haven't the strength."

He brushed them away, stooping so close to her that he took her tainted breath, hot and fetid, but felt no fear. At last she began to talk again, and this time of the sled and the rides she had upon it, and of the prayers Kenneth had heard and the "Stir-up Collect" that he did not know."

"Do you know it now?" she asked, rather sharply.

Kenneth nodded, and she continued:

"Say it."

He said it, and she went on:

"Do you know 'I believe'?"

He nodded again, and to her command, "Say it," he repeated the Creed, which she tried to say with him, but the words died on her lips.

"You are a good boy," she said in a whisper, "and I am tired. Let us say, 'Now I lay me,' and then I'll go to sleep."

He said it with her, her voice growing weaker as she added, very slowly, the old, familiar "God bless auntie and Connie and make her a good girl, and bless Kenneth and make him a good boy. Amen!"

She raised her hand as if in benediction; then it fell helplessly at her side, her eyes closed, and she seemed to be asleep. For days she lay in this state, neither, speaking nor moving, while the battle between life and death went on, and in Kenneth's heart hope died out as he watched her day and night, never

leaving her except for the rest and food he must take, or give out. Many inquiries were made for her, and prayers were said in the church on the Corners, at St. Jude's in Rocky Point and at the churches in Millville, while Kenneth prayed unceasingly that she might be given back to him, even though the *he* of whom she had raved should come to claim her.

One morning Dr. Catherin came and looked at her as she lay white as a corpse and as motionless. "I think the end is near," he said, taking his stand on one side of the bed, while Kenneth was on the other, his eyes fixed on the face where the death shadows were gathering. Only a faint fluttering of the heart told that she breathed, and this might stop at any moment. And while they sat watching here there came to the door a middle-aged woman, whose face would command attention at once, it was so calm and sweet and kind. Addressing herself to Mrs. Stannard, she said:

"How is she? I was passing, and stopped to inquire."

"Dying," was Mrs. Stannard's reply, while over the stranger's face there came an expression betokening some inward conflict.

"Dying," she repeated. "Have the doctors given her up?"

"Yes; they can do no more for her," was the tearful answer, while the woman stood a moment, wrapt in thought or prayer. Then she said: "May I see the doctor?"

"Which one? Two are with her," Mrs. Stannard said, and the woman replied:

"Both, if you please."

They came,—Dr. Catherin and Kenneth,—the former looking curiously at the woman, who, very respectfully, and with no cringing in her manner, said to them: "I hear you have done all you can for the young lady,—that you have given her up. Is that so?"

"Yes, madam," Kenneth answered, wondering who this stranger was intruding thus upon them, but still attracted by the sweetness of her face.

"Then, may I try?" she said. "It is not often that we offer our services, but in this case I feel that I must. May I see her? I am Mrs. Foster, from Boston."

The deacon had been a silent looker-on up to this point; when he started up, every hair on his head bristling with wrath. He knew now who the woman was. He had heard of her visiting at a neighbor's, and that she belonged to a sect which he esteemed little better than heathen.

"Ken," he exclaimed, "Ken, listen to me!" but before Kenneth could reply, Dr. Catherin, who guessed who the woman was, and while not believing in her at all was less prejudiced than the deacon, said in reply to Kenneth's questioning look at him: "Let her go up. She can do no harm. She is a Scientist."

"Oh-h!" and Kenneth shuddered. If all medicine had failed, what could she do? Nothing. And still her face pleaded with him until he said, "Come

with me," while his father, completely unstrung, exclaimed: "Ken, Ken, don't you know it is all a delusion,—a device of the devil,—and right here in my house!"

But Kenneth was half way up the stairs, and did not hear the distracted man, who, not willing to stay where such things were going on, seized his hat, and going out to the steps of the old church, sat there with the feeling that the sanctity of the place would in a measure atone for the enormity of the wickedness being practiced under his roof. And while he sat there his clergyman, the Rev. Mr. Stone, came up from the village on a calling tour. Seeing the deacon, he alighted from his buggy and came and sat down by him, asking how Miss Elliott was.

"Dying," the deacon replied. "Ken says so, and Dr. Catherin says so; and I guess they know, but,—oh,—don't blame me who has been a deacon in good and regular standing in the orthodox church for thirty years. 'Tain't my doings. They've a limb of Satan in there to see what she can do!"

"Wha-at?" Mr. Stone asked, thinking the deacon crazy. What do you mean? Who is in there?"

"A Science woman! You've heard of 'em," the deacon replied, expecting an explosion from his minister, but none came.

Mr. Stone was the most charitable of men, with broad views, which could take in more than the tenets of his own church.

"I've heard of them, yes," he said, "and believe them to be good Christian people,—fanatical and

cranky, perhaps,—but conscientious, and living what they profess."

The deacon looked aghast at this high-handed heresy in his minister, but just then Mrs. Foster was seen leaving the farmhouse, and he only said: "There she is. Let's go and see if Connie is up and dressed and combin' her hair, as they pretend they can do."

They found Mrs. Stannard and Dr. Catherin and Kenneth in the sitting-room, speaking together in low tones.

"How is Connie?" the deacon asked, and Kenneth replied:

"No change."

"I told you so when you let her in. What did she do?" was the deacon's next remark, to which no one answered till he repeated it to his wife. "What did she do?"

"For the land's sake, I don't know. I wasn't in there. Nobody was there but Kenneth, and he was just outside the door. Ask him," Mrs. Stannard said.

Kenneth, when appealed to as to what Mrs. Foster did during the twenty minutes she was in the sick room, said: "Nothing that I saw, but I think she prayed. I know I did."

"And so did I," "and I," came from Mrs. Stannard and Dr. Catherin, while the clergyman responded: "We know that the prayers of the righteous availeth much, so let us hope for the best."

"No, sir, the deacon chimed in; "if Connie lives, which she won't,—but if she does, it won't be that woman sittin' there twenty minutes with her hand

over her eyes. George of Uxbridge! No! It'll be them drops Ken gave her at the last."

"Which she didn't swallow," Dr. Catherin suggested, while the deacon gave him a look the meaning of which was, *"et tu, Brute?"*

He was a good deal excited for a man of his mild temper, and fancying his family had all gone over to the enemy, he went again to the steps of the church and sat down, to wonder if the world was turning upside down. If so, he should stick to the old side through thick and thin, and never give in to that woman. When he was somewhat cooled off he returned to the house, and going upstairs, sat down near the door of the room where Connie still lay in a stupor so near resembling death that once Kenneth whispered, "She is dead," knowing by the bitter pang of pain in his heart that in spite of his disbelief in the Scientist, he had taken hope from the assuring words, "She will live," as she left him. Half an hour went by, seeming to Kenneth like an age, and then Dr. Catherin, who was watching with him, put his hand under Connie's hair, and withdrawing it quickly, exclaimed:

"She is beginning to perspire; the crisis is past; she will live!"

"Thank God!" came faintly from Kenneth, while his father, who was still sitting at the head of the stairs and heard the doctor, came into the room and said:

"Yes, thank God, but not that woman; you needn't tell me. It don't stand to reason. Twenty minutes,

and did nothing! The fever had reached the top and had to turn!"

The fever certainly had reached the top and turned, and so rapid was Connie's improvement that in a few days she was sitting up for a short time and looking upon the daffodils and crocuses and the Morris house across the road, where a great many men were at work.

"What are they doing?" she asked Mrs. Stannard, who replied:

"Building the house over, as you may say. It belongs to my nephew Harry, you know."

Connie nodded, and Mrs. Stannard continued: "He has been abroad a long time. I wonder you never met him. He was married in London, a year ago last January, to a Miss Haynes, from Kentucky."

"Oh, yes," and Connie roused to something like interest. "Some one sent me a paper. I never knew who it was. And are they coming here to live?"

"Bimeby, when the house is ready," Mrs. Stannard replied. "Hal had a drawing made of what he wanted done and sent it to Mr. Green, the head carpenter in Millville, and he is seeing to it with a raft of men who dawdle half the time. I've watched 'em. Hal ought to be here to see it."

"And isn't he here?" Connie asked, by way of saying something rather than because she was greatly interested.

"No; he's in Europe still, ordering furniture and carpets," Mrs. Stannard said. "A pretty sum he'll have to pay, and his wife's father failed not long ago.

Isn't worth a cent, I hear. I am sure Hal depended a great deal on his wife's money, and she hasn't any."

"When are they coming?" Connie asked, and Mrs. Stannard replied:

"Not till June or July, when everything is done. Harry hates a muss; he wants it all fair sailing. That's the Morris of him. But he is a handsome fellow. I think you will like him."

To this Connie did not answer. She was getting tired, and said she would lie down and rest a while; then get up again and surprise Kenneth when he came home.

CHAPTER XIII

CONNIE'S SECRET

KENNETH was gone longer than usual that day, and was rather tired and somewhat out of sorts when he drove into the yard. He had met his father at the post-office, where there was a letter from Harry, who was still in Paris, issuing his orders for his villa, as he called it, sometimes by letter and sometimes by cablegram, irrespective of the cost. Since the failure of his father-in-law he had retrenched a little and countermanded an order for a rug valued at a thousand dollars, and thought himself very economical. Still the rug haunted him. He wanted it, and wanted an expensive set of Dresden china and a malachite mantel and tables for his green room, and the desire grew so intense that he at last wrote to a Mr. Jones, a hard-fisted man in Millville, who loaned money on good security and large interest, and demanded payment the day it was due. Three thousand dollars was the sum Hal asked for, and which he was sure Mr. Jones would loan him. His uncle, he knew, would sign the note with him, and with such security Mr. Jones would feel safe. Accompanying this letter to Mr. Jones was one to Deacon Stannard, asking for his indorsement, and saying it was only for six months, when all of Harry's indebtedness would be paid.

"In any event," he wrote, "you know I would not let any harm come to you and dear Aunt Mary,—the only mother I ever knew."

Kenneth did not like the letter. Harry was spending too much money on his villa, unless he knew just where to get it. Three thousand dollars was a large sum for the deacon to be responsible for, and Phil Jones was not the man to wait a day. Like Shylock, he would have the pound of flesh if it took the deacon's house and farm. It was this letter of Hal's and the fear that his father might sign the note which Hal had sent, which was affecting Kenneth's spirits as he came home from his long drive. Just for the moment Connie was forgotten. But his spirits brightened when he heard that she was sitting up waiting for him, and he hurried to her. It was a very thin, but a very lovely face which smiled at him as he entered the room into which the warm April sunshine was streaming, and in a square of which Connie sat, with the sunlight on her hair and hands which she held out to him.

"Just to shake," she said. "No more counting pulse or taking temperature. I am getting well. I am sure of it. Did that woman help? And is she helping now, do you think?"

Kenneth's countenance fell as he took the two small hands. He did not like to think about the woman. She had not been in the house since the day she sat by Connie, and said to him at leaving, "She will live." He had heard, however, of such things as absent treatments, but had no faith in them.

"God cured you," he said, "and made Dr. Catherin and myself the instruments. Perhaps the woman, too. Sincere prayer is never lost, and I know she was sincere. She is still at her friend's. Do you wish to see her?"

Something in his manner made Connie think he did not care to have her call again, and she answered: "Oh, no; I am getting well so fast, and although I know I have been so much trouble, I am glad I am here. I should have died in Genoa."

This reference to Italy reminded Kenneth of a letter he had found in the office for Connie, postmarked Florence. Disclaiming all sense of trouble, and speaking as if it had been a pleasure to watch by her day and night, he held the letter up and said: "A part of the time when you were so ill you were constantly asking for letters. Here is one. What will you give for it?"

In an instant Connie's white face was crimson, and there leaped into her eyes a look of fear, rather than of pleasure, as she said faintly: "Give it to me, please."

He gave it to her, and at a glance at the superscription the blood receded from her face, leaving it pale as before.

"It's from auntie," she said, breaking the seal and reading that the count and countess were in Florence, and had been and still were exceedingly anxious about Connie, whose illness had been reported to them by Kenneth.

"As soon as you are able we shall expect you to

return to us," her aunt wrote, and further on she added: "I have heard of your whilom lover at Monte Carlo playing heavily, and there was a lady with him. I told you he was a cheat, and you are well rid of him."

At this point the hot blood surged again into Connie's face, then left it paler than before, as she closed her eyes wearily.

"You are tired. You have sat up too long," Kenneth said, while Connie opened her eyes and looked at him pitifully, as she replied:

"My aunt writes me to come back, but I can't. I'd rather stay here. Shall I be in the way?"

Kenneth would like to have taken her in his arms and told her that was her resting place forever, but something in her eyes and manner since she became conscious had seemed a barrier he could not understand, and now he only replied: "No, Connie; never in the way. This is your home as long as you choose to make it so."

Evidently her letter had not done her much good, and Kenneth saw her tear it in bits, which she threw into the fire. She was not tired, and when Kenneth suggested that she lie down, she said: "I'm not going to be tired any more. That's Mrs. Foster's creed, isn't it? And I am going to try it, and pray all the time till I feel that I am well."

Her improvement was very rapid, and by the second week in May she was able to walk as far as the ledge where the Christmas tree had been. To Kenneth the place was sacred because of the little

girl in the blue hood and cloak, who had come at his call and smeared her rosy cheeks with sugar and grape juice, as she answered to her name, with Chance at her side. His grave was in a corner of the inclosure, and Kenneth pointed it out to Connie, whose eyes filled with tears as she stooped over it and said: "The dear old dog; he was a part of that happy week, the happiest I have ever known. I mean the happiness which left no sting, no ache, no wish that it had never been."

She was sitting now in a rustic chair Kenneth had substituted for the wooden one, and he was standing in front of her. How lovely she was in her convalescence, the delicate color coming back to her cheeks and the old-time brightness to her eyes, in which there was always a far-away look of sadness which Kenneth could not define, and which it seemed to him deepened whenever she met his gaze fixed upon her, as it was now with a meaning she could not mistake. There was a quivering of her eyelids; then the tears gathered in her long lashes as she looked steadily at him, as if bidding him speak and be done with it. He did not need any bidding. He had intended to speak when he brought her there, and when to his question, "Why are you crying?" she answered, "I was thinking of things, and wishing I were a child again," he burst out, "I am glad you are not a child, but a woman,—the loveliest I have ever seen, and the dearest."

Then, rapidly and passionately, he told his love, which began years before, when she said her prayers

at his side and played with the cats and Chance and worried the hens and fed old Sorrel, and he drew her on the sled and set up the Christmas tree for her. Nothing was omitted, and as she saw it all again her tears came hot and fast until, by the time he asked her to be his wife, they were falling like rain, and her hands were stretched toward him as for help. He took it as a good omen, and going to her, wound his arms around her, while for one brief moment she let her head rest on his bosom like a tired child. Then, with a great sob, like a cry of pain, she released herself from him and said: "Oh, Kenneth, if I only could, but I can't. There is something in the way. But just this once I may say I am happier for your love, and sometime, perhaps,—God only knows, and I have borne so much, and there is such an ache in my heart, such humiliation and shame, that the knowing a good, honest man like you loves me is a comfort, even though it cannot be, and I must *not* tell you why. Something happened in Switzerland a year last summer which will keep me from being your wife. I was some to blame, though not as much as the other party, for, shut up in a convent school as I had been for years, I knew little of the world, while he——"

"It was a *he*," Kenneth said a little sharply, and Connie replied: "Yes, but I cannot tell you any more now, except that I was foolish,—not wicked; never that. Oh, Kenneth, you must believe me a good girl, even if I do not tell you all, and you must stand by me and let me stay here. I should go insane anywhere else. Strange that the knowing you love me

helps me so much. Don't let your father and mother know."

She stretched her hand to him again, and he took it and held it between both his own. It was terrible to lose her, but would be more terrible for her to go away where he could not see her, and while his chin quivered with the emotion he tried to suppress, he asked, "Do you love that man?"

"*No!*" and a hot gleam of passion leaped into Connie's eyes. "I thought I did, but that is past, and if he stood here now as you stand sueing for my love, I'd spurn him as I would a snake. I have thought he might be dead. I shall find out in time, and when I do I will tell you all. Now I cannot. Don't refer to it again. Let me be just Connie, a weak girl, trusting you as a brother, happier to be here than anywhere else."

She had talked rather incoherently, but Kenneth understood that for the present at least he could only love her with no hope of a consummation by marriage. There was a bar between them, but she was as pure as the wintry snow. He was sure of that, and said to her at last: "I'll wait, and hope and pray that the obstacle may be removed."

"I knew you would, and you have made me as happy as I ever can be until it is removed," she said, lifting her face in such a confiding way that a hundred obstacles could not have prevented him from stooping down and kissing it, feeling, as he did so, that it was a kiss of betrothal which would last during all time.

They were very silent on their way back to the house, where, fortunately for Kenneth, he found several calls for his professional services. It was well for him to be busy, as it kept his mind from dwelling on Connie and the mystery he must not try to fathom. It was some comfort to know she was in his home, a sunbeam in his parents' life and all the world to him, with her sunny face and smile and words of welcome when he came in from his round of calls.

"Sometime I shall know," he thought, and the time was nearer than he supposed.

CHAPTER XIV

MRS. HARRY MORRIS

After that walk to the ledge Connie seemed much happier, and began to take a lively interest in the Morris villa, the work on which was being pushed rapidly. Mr. Jones had called upon the deacon for his signature to Harry's note for three thousand dollars, payable in six months. Connie was seated upon the piazza when he came, and through the open door could not fail to hear the conversation between the three men, Mr. Jones, the deacon and Kenneth, the latter of whom objected to his father's pledging himself for so large a sum.

"I feel sure you will have to pay it. I have heard a rumor that the place is mortgaged heavily," he said, while his mother, soft-hearted as ever where Hal was concerned, pleaded for him, saying he would never see them injured.

Suddenly a wild impulse seized Connie. She could not tell how or why, only that it came, and in a moment she was confronting the three men and startling them with the words: "I will sign that note with you, Guardy." She still called him by that name. "I have the means, and if I should lose it will not hurt me much, I spend so little here. I've never seen Mr. Morris, but I feel interested in him and his

bride. I am glad they are coming, and don't let a paltry three thousand dollars mar their happiness."

It seemed a small sum to her, who knew so little the value of money, but to the deacon it was a fortune. He was, however, persuaded, and when Mr. Jones left the house he had both the deacon's and Connie's name as securities on Harry's note.

"You don't know how funny I feel since I signed that note," Connie said to Kenneth, after Jones was gone. "I don't know why, except that I feel funny, —glad, as it were, with a new interest in the house, as if it were mine."

She was greatly interested in it, and her interest increased as it progressed towards the end, and loads of furniture came up from the freight house in foreign boxes, some from Rome and Florence and Paris and London. There were pictures and statuary and carpets and rugs and curtains and tables and chairs and bric-a-brac of every description, and two men came from Albany to see that they were properly placed. Connie, however, was the leading spirit, as the men at once recognized her delicate taste, and not only listened to her suggestions, but consulted her when she made none. Her special interest was centered in what was to be Mrs. Morris' sitting-room and boudoir. Here her ideas were wholly carried out, and nothing could have been prettier than the general effect of rugs and hangings and pictures, when all was done and the rooms ready.

"I feel as if in a nightmare," she said to herself,

as she sat alone for a few minutes in the boudoir, the day before Hal and his wife were expected.

And this nightmare kept her awake the most of the night, so that it was rather a pale face which smiled upon Kenneth the next morning.

"I did not sleep well, that's a fact," she said. "I must have been rather nervous about Mrs. Morris. I intend to like her immensely."

She was very busy all the morning, arranging and rearranging the rooms of the villa, and filling them with the flowers she had ordered from Rocky Point and Millville. It was June, the season of roses, and the house was full of them, their fragrance permeating every nook, and making Connie a little faint when she at last sat down to rest, while thoughts of Interlaken and the bowlder by the running brook came crowding into her mind, as they had not done since her talk with Kenneth by the ledge in the huckleberry pasture.

"Once I thought to be happy like Kitty Haynes," she said, and two great tears splashed down upon her hands. Then quickly recovering herself, she thought how glad she was to have a congenial companion, as she was sure Kitty would be. Of Harry she scarcely thought at all, except that Kenneth did not quite approve of him. Probably he was a little faster than Kenneth. He could scarcely have seen as much of the world as he had and not be. He was very handsome, Mrs. Stannard had said, and her description of him had reminded her of the bowlder among the Alps and the man who sat there with her. That man had

vanished like a myth, and Harry Morris was coming that afternoon with his wife.

They had landed in New York two weeks before and been detained there. Harry had written to Kenneth that he expected to reach Millville on Thursday afternoon, and asked that his new carriage be sent to meet him. He had thanked his uncle for signing his note to Jones, but he had made no mention of Connie's signature. Probably he did not know of it, or that she was at the farmhouse, for Kenneth had never mentioned her in the few letters sent to his cousin since she came. Everything that could be done to make the house and grounds attractive had been done, and people had driven for miles to see and admire and wonder that so much should be expended upon a place which was to be occupied only during the summer. His winters he should spend in New York or Florida, Hal had written to Green, his agent, who superintended everything. Three or four fine horses and two or three carriages had come to the villa, awaiting Hal's approbation, and it was in one of the latter that Kenneth went down to the station to meet the four o'clock train from New York.

It was not often that many people were there at that time of day, and Kenneth was surprised at the crowd he found waiting. They had all been through the handsome house and grounds, and heard of the handsome wife, and were there to see her and Harry, who, with so much grandeur, was invested with an added importance to their minds. The train was on time and only stopped a moment to deposit six or

eight trunks and three people,—a middle-aged colored woman wearing a red turban and carrying a bundle which looked very much like a baby; another colored girl loaded with parcels, and a young lady, who stood looking timidly around at the crowd staring curiously at her, and wondering where her husband was. Kenneth saw her and hurried towards her, noticing that she was a brunette with a brilliant complexion and soft dark eyes, which lighted up wonderfully the moment she saw him.

"Mrs. Morris?" he said, and she replied, "Yes, and you are Dr. Kenneth, Harry's cousin, I am sure, and I am so glad to meet you. I'm not used to travelling alone, and Harry had to stay in New York at the very last on that tiresome business, I don't know what it is. I wanted to stay, too, but he said I must come, and I'm here. He is coming in a few days."

She talked rapidly and kept her eyes fixed upon the turbaned woman, whom she called Cindy, and who was hushing the white bundle in her arms with a cooing kind of sound. Kenneth was looking at her, too, and at the bundle, which was certainly alive. Detecting the surprise in his face, the lady said: "It's our baby, three months old. Harry wouldn't write it, as he wanted to surprise you all. She is a little beauty. Come here, Cindy, and show the baby. There! Isn't she lovely?" she continued, when the flimsy covering was removed, showing a little round baby face in which Kenneth saw a look like his cousin. "She has such a pretty name, too," the proud mother continued, "Constance, though we call her Connie."

"Constance!" Kenneth repeated in surprise, while Kitty replied: "Yes, it was Harry's idea. She was born in Constance, and that made him think of it."

"We have a Constance here, whom we call Connie," Kenneth said, as he led the way to the brougham, and while they were on the way to the villa he explained who she was and said: "You are sure to like her."

"I know I shall," Kitty answered, "and I am so glad she is here. I was afraid I might be rather lonely. Harry said there was no—no——"

She stopped suddenly, while Kenneth rejoined: "No ladies of just your kind? You are right, Mrs. Morris, but Connie is different. Connie is——"

"Yes, I see. I understand what Connie is, but please call me Kitty. I'm your cousin, you know," Kitty said, and added, "funny baby should be called Connie, too; but I'm glad that she is."

She was a bright, sparkling little woman, and talked all the time during the drive until they came in sight of the house, when she sprang up and clasped her hands with delight.

"Oh, is this really the place? I never dreamed it was so grand and lovely. And how could he afford it? He has told me so much that I must be economical, now father has failed."

She said frankly what she thought, and Kenneth watched her admiringly, contrasting her with Connie and giving the latter the preference, of course. He knew Connie was to be at the villa with his father and mother, and as the carriage entered the gate he

saw her standing on the steps, looking like some fair lily in her white gown and blue ribbons, with a single rose in her belt.

"That's Connie, I know, and she's Paris all over. I shall like her," Kitty said, springing from the carriage the moment it stopped and going up to the group waiting for her. "I don't need to be introduced. I know this is Aunt Mary, and this Uncle Ephraim, and this Connie; may I call you that?" she said, kissing each in turn, and holding Connie's hand as she continued: "I didn't know about you until Kenneth told me, and I am glad that you are here and that baby has your name. Funny, isn't it? And Harry didn't know you either."

They were all around the baby now, and Connie, who loved children dearly, took it in her arms and held its soft face against her own and thought she saw in it a likeness to something she had seen, and wondered why that bowlder among the Alps should come up to torment her when she was going to be so happy with Kitty and the baby. It did not take Kitty long to explain, as well as she could, why her husband was not with her. He would come within a week, surely, and then they would all be so happy. She was older than Connie, but seemed younger, she was so small, and she flitted about the house like a humming bird, delighted with everything and especially with Connie, who, she insisted, should stay altogether at the villa until her husband came.

"And Dr. Kenneth, too, if he will, and Aunt Mary and Uncle Ephraim, I want you all," she said, in her

soft Southern voice, with a bit of foreign accent in it. "You can stay, and we will worship the baby together."

She seemed to think the baby the centre of interest, as it was, but no one took to it as readily as Connie, who spent the night at the villa, and who, after the baby was undressed, rocked it to sleep, and then sat a long time looking into its little face and wondering whose features she saw so plainly mirrored there.

CHAPTER XV

THE PHOTOGRAPH

The days passed rapidly, and Connie and Kitty, as they called each other, seemed to have become one personality, so fast their friendship grew. Connie spent the most of her time at the villa, where the baby was the great attraction. For hours she would hold it, studying its features, and sometimes seeming almost to get a glimpse of something she had seen like them; then the likeness would fade into a mist, leaving her as puzzled as ever.

"She is like Harry," Kitty said to her one day when she sat with the baby in her lap, "and he is the handsomest man you ever saw. Dr. Kenneth is grand and splendid, and makes you feel that there is a power there for great and noble things,—self-sacrifice, I mean, and all that. Harry is different. I love him dearly, but I don't believe he would give up as much as Dr. Kenneth. He always gets his way, he is so persuasive, and his eyes and voice talk. He was very kind to me when he heard father had lost everything and could not send me the allowance I'd always had. 'Served me right,' he said. I didn't know what he meant, unless he had married me for my money. When I asked him he kissed me and said I was all the world to him. He told me though, before we were

married, that he had once loved a beautiful girl, and when I asked, 'Why didn't you marry her?' he said, 'Because I wanted you.' Nice, wasn't it? I have often wondered who that girl was, and wanted to ask him, but think perhaps I'd better not. Would you?"

"No," Connie answered, mechanically, as she poked the baby's chin trying to make it laugh.

"Strange you have never seen Harry," Kitty continued, "but you will soon. I expect him to-morrow night or the next."

She was going out to drive that morning, with the baby, and asked Connie to go with her; but Connie declined, saying she was not quite well, and would rather stay in the cool, quiet room if Kitty did not mind. The baby was soon ready, and as Kitty came down with her wraps on, she said to Connie: "I have just come across, in one of my trunks, a splendid photo of Harry, taken in Paris two years ago. It is on my table, if you care to see it."

Connie thanked her, and after the carriage drove from the house, with Kitty kissing her hand to her and the baby's little face looking out from its lace cap, she went upstairs and into Kitty's room. On a table some books were lying, and near them a large photograph on an easel. This must be Kitty's husband, and she went swiftly towards it, then stopped suddenly and put up her hand to wipe the mist she thought must be before her eyes, preventing her from seeing clearly. But there was no mist. She was not mistaken. Kitty's husband was the man who had wrecked her life. She had a photograph like this one,

—smaller, but like it, taken in Paris two years ago. She knew those soft, persuasive eyes, the smile around the mouth, the way the brown hair was parted on the forehead, the erect and rather haughty carriage,—all were his. She could not be mistaken, and for a moment everything around her turned black as she grasped a chair to keep from falling.

"Villain!" she said, when she could speak. "You have wronged Kitty more than you have me, and how dare you come back and face me? I believe I could strike you dead, if it were really you smiling upon me there, instead of your picture."

Connie was terrible in her anger and resentment. All her love for the man had died out, and what she felt was indignation against him, with an intense pity for Kitty.

"What can I do to spare her? What ought I to do?" she asked herself, as she continued to look at the picture, which each moment grew more like the man who had sat with her on the Alpine bowlder and sworn eternal fidelity.

In a great emergency some minds work rapidly, and Connie's was one of them. To stay and meet Harry was impossible without betraying herself. Betrayal meant ruin to Kitty, and something in the warm-hearted Southern girl had appealed to her strangely.

"I love her," she whispered, "and there is the baby named for me, I know now, instead of the city where it was born. Kitty must never know what I do, and I must go away before he comes."

But where, and how, and what excuse to give, were the problems she must work out alone. Kenneth had left that morning for Boston, where he was to meet some members of the medical faculty. He might be gone two days, and she could not consult him. She could consult no one, and must act for herself. Providentially, as it seemed to her, she found on her return to the farmhouse a letter from her aunt, saying she should sail in a few days for New York, and wished Connie would see that her house was put in order and be there to receive her. "God has surely opened a way, and I'll go to-day," Connie thought, as she read the letter, wondering at her calmness when her plans were finally made. Mrs. Stannard was surprised and sorry, and so was Kitty, when she returned from her drive and stopped for a moment at the farmhouse.

"Going before Harry comes? He'll be here to-night on the late train. I've had a telegram," she said, while Connie bit her lips until the blood nearly came through, the feeling within her was so strong to cry out, "He is a rascal, he is a villain, and that is why I go away."

"You will come back in a few days," Kitty said, and Connie replied: "Perhaps; I can't tell. I will write, and now please leave me to rest a little; I am very tired."

She wanted to be alone, and think whether to tell Kenneth or not. The hardest of all was leaving him, for life was very sweet with him, even if he could

never be more to her than a friend, and when she was alone she broke down and cried like a little child.

"Oh, Kenneth! if it could be, but it never can. I had thought he might be dead, and that some time I should know, but he is alive; he is Kitty's husband and baby's father, and they must never know, and it can never be. But I will tell you."

Drying her tears, she began a letter which would tell Kenneth why she was leaving.

"Dear Kenneth," she began, "I have found out something and must go away before your cousin comes. Kitty showed me his photograph, and he is the man who stands between you and me. *He is my husband.*"

Something like the sharp cut of a knife pierced her heart as she wrote the words and looked at them with a desire to tear them from the paper.

"I can't tell you about it," she went on. "It is too dreadful to recall. I will only say he bade me good-by the night we were married, and I have never seen him since. He called himself *Harold Meurice,* and that is why I have never identified him with your cousin. My aunt did not like him and must not know who he really is. No one but you must know, for Kitty's sake and the baby's. Oh, Kenneth! It cannot be wicked to tell you, as I say good-by forever, that I love you; but don't try to see me; it can do no good. I must live my life alone. Don't tell *him* that you know. Oh, Kenneth, Kenneth! Good-by.

"Connie."

A great tear fell on the word "Connie" and blotted it, but she could not rewrite the note, and, folding it, she directed it to Kenneth, and taking it to his room placed it where he would see it at once. There was not much time to lose if she would take the three o'clock train, and she accepted Kitty's offer to help her pack, while Mrs. Stannard, half distraught with the suddenness of Connie's going, kept wondering why she need take everything, if she were coming back. And Connie could not talk, for the swelling in her throat and the tears she was trying to keep down. She was very white, and there was a drawn look about her mouth and an expression in her eyes which troubled Kitty, and when everything was done and they were waiting for the carriage which was to take Connie to the station, she put her arm caressingly around her neck and said:

"Is it some trouble, Connie, and can I help you?"

"No; oh, no. You least of all," was Connie's answer, and putting her head on Kitty's shoulder, she cried aloud for a moment, then lifting up her head, she said, with an attempt to smile: "Excuse me for the weakness. It is like leaving home, where I have been so happy. I must cry a little."

Mrs. Stannard, Kitty and the baby went to the station with her in Kitty's brougham, with the coachman in livery and the blooded horses. Could she have had her choice, she would have preferred going in a wheelbarrow to this fine turnout of the man who had so deceived her. But there was no alternative. Deacon Stannard was away, and she must go with Kitty, who

clung to her as if she were her sister, and whose tears were hot on her cheek when she at last said good-bye.

"Too bad you can't meet Harry; but you saw his picture, didn't you?" Kitty said.

"Yes, I saw it," Connie gasped, springing on the platform of the car so as to hear no more of Harry, whose baby, held high up in Kitty's arms, was the last thing she saw clearly as the train took her away.

CHAPTER XVI

KENNETH AND HARRY

The business which had taken Kenneth to Boston was finished sooner than he expected, and he started for Millville the day after Connie left it. He had made a speech on one of the subjects under discussion, and the older members of the faculty had applauded and pronounced him an honor to the profession. And he had heard their praises and made his speech like one in a dream, wondering how he could have put two sentences together connectedly, and why Connie's name had not been mixed in with what he said. She was constantly in his thoughts from the time he bade her good-bye and looked into her clear blue eyes, where a shadow of trouble was still brooding, though not so dark as it had been. She was happier since her talk with him by the ledge, and he was more unhappy. What she had told him troubled him continually, filling his brain with conjectures as to the bar there was between them. Away from her, his mind was in a greater turmoil than when with her, and all the way to Boston and after his arrival he was thinking of her, and that she *must* tell him on his return what it was. He was not usually nervous, but he was fast becoming so, and during his speech he felt his heart beating so loudly that it seemed to him that those who sat

nearest must hear it, and with every heart beat there was a thought of Connie, who, it seemed to him, was stretching out her hands and calling to him. But for this he would have stayed in Boston the second night and gone home in the morning, but so morbid and nervous had he grown with a fancy that he was wanted, that he decided to take a late train, which left him in Millville at midnight.

As there was no carriage at that hour, he walked rapidly up the hill till he came near the villa. There was a light in the nursery, and as he passed the house he heard through the open window the baby's cry and Kitty's voice soothing it, while mingled with hers was another voice which he recognized as Hal's.

"Baby has colic, I dare say," he thought, and his first impulse was to offer his services.

Then he changed his mind as the crying ceased, and went on home, where his mother let him in, marvelling to see him at that hour, and full of the news that Connie had gone.

"Gone! Where? and why?" Kenneth exclaimed, feeling that his nervousness in Boston meant something.

His mother told him all she knew, adding: "She looked queer and appeared queer; I don't think she really wanted to go. I believe she'll be back before long."

There was comfort in this, and after hearing that Harry had come the night before and didn't seem very well, he bade his mother good-night and went to his room, where the first thing he saw was Connie's

note upon his table. It did not take long to read it, and after it was read he felt for a moment as if he were dying and tried to call for help. But no sound came from his lips, which prickled, as did his whole body.

"This will never do. I must shake it off or I shall die," he said, groping in the blackness gathering around him. I must not die. I must live to kill Harry and then shoot myself, and no one but Connie will ever know why."

This was his thought the entire night. There was a revolver in his drawer, and he took it out and examined it, finding two balls in its chambers. "One for Hal and one for me," he said as he replaced it in the drawer. He didn't prickle now at all, nor feel at all, except that he was going to kill Harry, and he waited impatiently for the dawn, which came, rosy and bright and sweet, with the scent of flowers and the hay his father had cut the day before. He saw the smoke curling up from the kitchen chimney of the villa and knew the servants were astir.

"Hal will not be up for hours, maybe; he was always a late riser," he thought, "and I can't kill him in bed before Kitty and the baby Connie. I must wait. There are things I must say to him, and Kitty must never know she is not his wife, or why I killed him. I must find him alone."

He tried to seem natural at breakfast, but his mother saw something was the matter, and charged it to fatigue and Connie's absence. After breakfast he went to the stable, where Pro and Con whinnied him

a welcome, the latter rubbing her head against his arm in token of her gladness at seeing him.

"I shall never feed you again, my pets," he said, as he gave them double their usual allowance, and then there flitted through his mind a vague wonder as to what would become of them and his father and mother, and what the world would say.

He didn't care. He was going to kill Harry, and he kept saying it to himself while watching the villa. At last he saw Kitty come out in her big hat and red parasol, with Cindy and the baby cart and the baby in it. They were going for a walk, and he watched them till they were out of sight, and thought what a dainty little body Kitty was, and how pretty she looked in her white gown and big hat with red poppies upon it. But it didn't matter. He was going to kill Hal, and now was his time. He found him in what had been fitted up as his den. Evidently he had not been up long, for he was in his dressing-gown and slippers, and had the air of one just out of bed. He was, however, smoking a cigarette, and on the table beside him were glasses, with soda water, lemons, brandy, whisky and sugar.

As Kenneth appeared in the door he sprang up, and, extending his hand, exclaimed in his old, cheery way: "Hallo, Ken! I take it very nice in you to call so soon. When did you get home? Sorry you found me *en dishabille*. Fact is, baby had stomach ache, and kept me awake. She's gone out with Kitty. Great baby, that, and named for your Connie."

His flippancy had irritated Kenneth from the start,

and the mention of Connie made him furious. Had he no sense of decency? It seemed not, and Kenneth's face was white and hard as he advanced a few steps and stood before his cousin like an avenging nemesis.

Something in his attitude and expression made Hal stare at him in wonder, as he said, "What is it, Ken, that you seem so savage, as if you had come to eat me?"

"I haven't come to eat you, but to kill you!" Kenneth replied, producing a revolver and holding it within a few feet of Harry, who staggered back into his chair, sure that Kenneth was mad.

"Kill me!" he gasped. "For what?"

"For bigamy," Kenneth answered. "For blighting the life of the sweetest girl that ever lived, and degrading another."

He was certainly mad, and Harry moved a little out of the range of the pistol, which followed and covered him.

"Ken," he began, "you are crazy. I am no bigamist. I have never married but one girl, and that is Kitty."

"It's a lie," Kenneth roared, while there began to steal into his mind a ray of hope that either there was a mistake or Harry was not the man. "What about Connie Elliott, whom you married in Interlaken? Have you forgotten her so soon?"

Harry drew a deep breath of relief and tried to become his old easy self. But it was hard work. There

was a good deal that was crooked to explain, and the revolver was dangerously near to him.

"Does Connie think that of me?" he asked; and Kenneth replied, "She thinks you a villain."

"I am a villain, double dyed, but not so bad as that," Harry said. "Take a chair, Ken; take two chairs, if you like, but drop that murderous thing you are holding under my nose, I can't talk with it in front of me. It might go off, you know."

There was a good deal of the winsome Hal about him, and Kenneth began to feel its influence, and held the pistol at his side, but would not sit down.

"I may shoot you yet, and can do it better standing," he said. "Begin at once, and be sure you tell the truth. I shall know if you are lying, and my pistol will not miss its mark."

"Heavens and earth!" Hal exclaimed. "Do you think I can lie with a loaded revolver in front of me, and you looking black as thunder? No, sir! I shall tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth."

He was getting flippant again, and Kenneth scowled as he began: "You remember the blow-out when Pondy rolled under the table."

Kenneth nodded and Hal went on: "Poor little beggar! He died last year in London with delirium tremens. I happened to be in the same hotel and was with him at the last, and just before he died he said to me, 'I am going to enshoy myshelf immenshly,' and perhaps he is, who knows? I don't think our Heavenly Father holds grudges and blows out fellow's brains for something he never did. Do you?"

"Leave Pondy and go on!" was Kenneth's stern reply; and Hal went on: "You remember Pondy toasted Constance Elliott as the most beautiful girl he had ever seen, and you were so mad to hear her name from his lips that you smashed a cut-glass tumbler. Well, Pondy said she was a great heiress, or would be if some mines panned out as they were likely to do. About that time I was thinking of heiresses, for I wanted money badly,—had a lot of debts on hand. Kitty Haynes was in my mind the prettiest girl I'd ever met, but I wanted to see this Connie. I went abroad, you know; heard where she was and found her. I'd got into a kind of scrape in Paris and seen my name rather unpleasantly conspicuous in the newspapers, and just for a lark I thought I'd change it for a while. Our family name years ago was *Meurice,* and my second name Harold, so I put the two together and was *Harold Meurice,* from New York, which had a more aristocratic sound than plain Harry Morris, Millville, smelling of factories and things. I needn't tell you that I look well and talk well."

"The devil is not your equal," Kenneth interposed, and Hal continued, with the most imperturbable good humor.

"I don't believe he is when I lay myself out, as I did with Connie. I made love to her for six weeks, and found her like Barkis,—'willin'! There, there! Keep that pistol down. I did not mean any disrespect. She was an innocent, simple-hearted girl, who had been in a convent school so long that she knew

nothing of the world, certainly not of men like me, and she believed every word I said. Her aunt was a regular she-dragon, who disliked and distrusted me, and did her best to keep her niece from seeing me alone, and encouraged her marrying a measley count, whom she afterwards took herself. At last I received a telegram from Tom Haynes, saying he and Kitty were in Paris, and wanted me to join them. By this time I was pretty far gone, and felt that I could not give Connie up. There was a walk we had once taken out towards Lauterbrunnen, and we took it that last afternoon of my stay in Interlaken. I told her I was going away the next morning, but should soon come back, and in the meantime I wanted to bind her to me, so that her meddling aunt could not separate us, or persuade her to take the count. I think the devil put the plan into my head; he has helped me a good many times."

Kenneth nodded approvingly, and Harry went on: "I suggested that we be married, and when she asked how we could without priest or witness, I did some tall lying. I told her that the marriage ceremony was far more simple to be binding than she thought; that if we pledged ourselves to each other in the words of the Prayer Book it was lawful. I was a lawyer and I knew and cited some cases I had known, and talked law and civil law, and said that as a lawyer I could marry myself and all that, until her brain was in a whirl and she believed all I said,—lies, of course. Oh, pray don't hold that ugly thing that way. It might go off, and this pretty room be spattered with

my brains and you tried for murder. I meant no harm to the girl. I only wanted to have her believe she was mine, for, with her yielding nature, I feared her aunt's influence. There was a big bowlder by a brook which had its source in the mountains back of us, and there we sat down and pledged our faith to each other. I, Harold take thee, Connie, and so on. You know how it goes. 'You are mine now,' I said, 'just as truly as if a bishop had heard our vows, but when I come to claim you we will, of course, have the ceremony in public, to satisfy your aunt.' There was a troubled look on her face, whose expression I shall never forget, as she said to me, 'It does not seem a marriage with no prayer in it. Let's say the Lord's Prayer together.'"

"Oh," Kenneth groaned, tightening his hold on the pistol and recalling the little girl who had once said that prayer at his side.

"There you are again, wanting to shoot me," Hal exclaimed, "and I deserve it, and wouldn't mind much, if it were not for Kitty and the baby. I couldn't say 'Our Father' with her to save my life, but she said it with her head bowed and the fading light falling upon the sheen of her fair hair. Now you *are* going to kill me!" and Hall sprang from his chair as Kenneth raised his right hand.

"For Heaven's sake throw that thing out of the window, if you want me to keep my senses."

"Sit down, and don't be a coward as well as a knave. I shall not kill you till your story is ended. Go on. You made her think she was your wife?"

"Yes," Hal answered, returning to his chair and beginning to mix a cocktail, which he took down at one gulp. "Must brace my nerves," he said. "Yes, I made her believe it was lawful, and bound her to secrecy till I came to claim her. I left the next morning and have never seen her since. I found Tom in Paris with Kitty, who was so pretty and piquant and full of life that I began to compare her with Connie, to whom I meant to be faithful, and probably should have been but for a rumor which came from her aunt's bánker that she had lost all her money and was dependent upon her aunt. I took some pains to verify the truth of the report, with a result that I believed it, and then came the tug between Connie with nothing and Kitty with thousands. Kitty won, and I at once wrote to Connie confessing the truth, even to my real name, and that I was your cousin. I called myself a liar, a blackguard, a villain, and if you can think of any worse name I called myself that. I hinted, too, that Kitty was very much in love with me, that her brother knew it, and that with his Kentucky blood I feared what he might do if I left her. In short, I wrote so pathetic a letter that it actually drew tears to my eyes as I read it, and pitied myself for being between two fires, or loves. I loved Connie, I loved Kitty, who was on the ground and won. Why my letter never reached Connie, I don't know. I sent it to Interlaken, but she must have left before it reached her. Probably it was forwarded from one post to another and was finally lost, as letters not infrequently are on the Continent. When I was mar-

ried I had a paper sent to her through her aunt's banker in Paris. I named our baby for her, and though I love Kitty dearly, there is not a day of my life that I do not think of Connie. It was a shock when I heard she was here; but as Kitty wrote how fond they were of each other, and how Connie took to the baby, I concluded she had forgiven me, and was rather anxious to see her again. I hear that her money, instead of being lost, has increased until she is really an heiress, while Kitty's father has lost everything. Serves me right, though the Lord only knows how I am ever to pay my debts. Their name is legion. Perhaps you'd better shoot me and put me out of my trouble. I've told you the truth. I have repented in sackcloth and ashes of that episode in Switzerland. I have even been on my knees before my Creator, and what more can I do?"

Kenneth came near smiling at this assertion, which was so like Harry, and his hand relaxed its hold on the revolver. In his bitter anger he had scarcely noticed Harry's personal appearance, but he could see now how changed he was. His face was flushed and thin, and there were dark hollows about his eyes, telling of ill-health or dissipation, or both. But he was still too indignant to ask any questions, and he had seen a red parasol at the gate, and knew Kitty had returned with the baby. In a moment she was in the room, bright and breezy, delighted to see Kenneth and solicitous about her husband, whose hair she smoothed as she asked if he had had any breakfast.

"He is a little lazy this morning," she said to Ken-

neth. "Baby had colic last night and kept him awake, and then I don't think he looks quite well, do you? He is positively feverish," and she took one of his hands in hers and began to rub it. "Grippe, maybe. Please give him something and feel his pulse. How fast it beats."

"I am glad I didn't kill him," Kenneth thought, as he watched her and saw her anxiety for her husband.

He had slipped the revolver into his pocket, but he could not then touch Hal's hand to count his pulse, and Hal understood it, and, gently pushing Kitty aside, mixed himself some brandy and water, saying, as he drank it:

"Never mind, Kitty. I don't need medicine; this is better."

Suddenly it occurred to Kitty to ask if Kenneth were not surprised to find Connie gone.

"Yes," he said; "but I hope to have her back very soon."

"And to think, she went just as Harry was coming home, and he never saw her."

A quick, telegraphic look passed between the two young men which Kitty did not see, and would not have understood if she had. The baby had been brought in by this time, and Kitty put it on Hal's lap for Kenneth to see how fatherly he looked.

"I am so glad her name is Connie," she said. "Funny, Harry chose it without knowing the real Connie. Baby has not yet been christened, and I mean to have the big Connie her sponsor when she comes back. You think it will be soon?"

"I hope so," Kenneth answered, and then, not caring to hear the subject further discussed, he said good morning, and went out, thinking to himself again, "I am glad I didn't shoot him."

CHAPTER XVII

LIFE AND DEATH

Connie was in her aunt's house seeing that it was made ready for the count and countess, who were to arrive in the *Etruria*. Never since the Interlaken days had her heart ached as it was aching now, with its load of pain and horror. Kenneth was lost forever, and the man she had trusted was his cousin and the pretended husband of Kitty. She always shuddered when she thought of bright, sunny-faced Kitty and the baby. They must never know and I must never see them again, or Kenneth, she thought. "He is home by this time," she said to herself on the morning after Kenneth's meeting with Harry. "He has read my note. I wonder what he thinks and how he will meet his cousin." Then there came over her a great longing to see him once more, to hear his voice, to know what he thought, and if there were any way out of it.

This idea, that Kenneth might in some way "get her out of it," had never occurred to her until that moment when the maid entered bringing her a card.

"Kenneth!" she almost screamed, but smothered the sound. "Where is he? Show him up," she said, and in a moment she was folded in Kenneth's arms.

Forgetful of everything except that he was there,

she had gone forward to meet him with a glad cry, and had not resisted when he held her closely to him and, kissing her passionately, said: "My Connie, my own at last! There is nothing between us, and I have come to tell you."

He could not wait, after his interview with Hal, but had taken the first train for New York, reaching the city too late to see Connie that night. But at the earliest possible hour in the morning he had found her, and was kissing her again and again, and telling her it was all right, and she lay passive in his arms, and did not ask for an explanation. He said it was all right, and she knew it was, and could wait until he was ready to explain. He omitted the revolver part, but told the story much as Hal had told it, while Connie listened with surprise and vexation at her own credulity in believing that the rite was valid.

"I was very foolish, almost imbecile," she said, "or I should have known better. But I was utterly ignorant of law or marriage contracts, and he was so persuasive, and I believed he knew everything. I never received his letter; if I had, it would have saved me much pain; but perhaps I might not have gone to the farmhouse, and *you*——" she added, nestling closer to him, while he rained kisses upon her upturned face.

No words of betrothal passed between them. She knew she was his, and he knew he was hers, and the day passed rapidly, with nothing to mar their happiness except the knowing that Kenneth must go back to his patients, whom he had left too long.

"I shall come again soon and many times, and in September you will be my wife," he said at parting, and with this thought to cheer him he took the night train for Millville, where he was sorely needed.

Harry was very ill. His constitution, which was never very strong, had been undermined by dissipation, of which Kitty suspected nothing. She knew of absences from her of two or three days on business, he said, and that these absences were always followed by terrible headaches and a painful state of nervousness. Added to these *sprees,* and they were nothing less, were his financial troubles. He had counted on Kitty's money and lost it, and had very little of his own left. He loved luxury and must have it at any cost. His house and furniture were mortgaged for all they were worth, and he had no means of paying the three thousand dollars to Jones, unless some speculations in New York turned out favorably. He had sent Kitty on in advance, while he stayed to try his luck again. He tried it and lost, and was a totally ruined man when he came at last to his handsome villa, knowing that payment would be required in the autumn from Jones, at least, if from no one else. He dreaded him the most, for failure to pay him meant trouble for his uncle, who had endorsed his note. This haunted him constantly, and it was more than the baby's colic which had kept him awake the night of Kenneth's return. He had not slept for three nights, and his encounter with Kenneth had added to his nervousness, which finally culminated in a violent chill, which came on a few hours after Ken-

neth left him. In great alarm, Kitty summoned the doctor, who prescribed some remedies, and said, as he gave directions for their use:

"I am going to New York to-night and shall not be here to-morrow."

"Oh, Dr. Ken," Kitty exclaimed. "What if he should shake again and you gone? Must you go?"

"Yes, he must," Harry answered for him. "I am all right. He is going to see Connie. Give her my respects,—yes, my love, if Kitty don't mind. Good-by, old chap. Almost a pity you didn't take aim."

This he said too low for Kitty to hear, and these were the last really rational words Kenneth ever heard him speak. He did shake many times while Kenneth was gone, and the chills were followed by a raging fever, which was delirium when Kenneth returned. They had sent for Dr. Catherin, and all which the skill of the two doctors could do was done, but nothing checked the fever, which was scorching Harry's life-blood and taking compound interest for all his excesses. Sometimes he was perfectly quiet, but oftener he talked of things poor Kitty could not understand, and Kenneth only in part. Sometimes it was of Monte Carlo, where he had played heavily and lost, and again of places he had visited in Paris and London, of which he did not wish Kitty or his aunt to know. Then it was of the Alps and the bowlder and the prayer she said, and which he could not say, and the letter she did not get, but which he certainly wrote, and of the revolver which he seemed to think was always aimed at his heart.

"I tell you it is there," he would say, when Kenneth tried to disabuse his mind of the idea. "Pondy is holding it, and by and by he'll pull the trigger, and presto, we two will be enjoying ourshelves immenshely."

His laugh was terrible, and Kitty would stop her ears to shut out the sound.

"Somebody has tried to kill him," she said to Kenneth, whose conscience smote him a little, but who made no reply.

Now that Connie was his and Hal so low, he felt only pity for him and ministered to him with all a brother's care, but with no good result. As the summer days grew hotter the fever ran higher and higher, until at last neither Dr. Catherin nor Kenneth gave any hope to Kitty, whose thoughts turned to Connie as a friend she would like to have with her.

"Do you think she would come?" she said to Kenneth, who answered:

"I don't really know. I'll telegraph to her for you."

That afternoon he sent a telegram to Connie, saying:

"Hal is dying. Kitty wants you. Come if you can.
KENNETH."

He was right in his conjecture that a message from him would be more effectual than one from Kitty. It found her in her aunt's house, tired of everything, and with a dread that the count, while treating her as if he were her father, and professing the utmost affection for his wife, might again say words to her

to which she could not listen. If Hal were dying, and Kitty wanted her, duty and inclination bade her go, and the morning after she received the telegram she was on her way to Millville. She was not expected on that train, and as there was no one to meet her, Jehu and Henriet took her up the hill to the villa, on the doors of which knots of crape were tied.

"He's dead!" she exclaimed, while Jehu rejoined:

"My land! so he is. I knew he was crazy as a bear."

Kenneth saw her alight, and went to meet her, taking her at once to Kitty, who for hours had sat still and dry eyed, with a look on her face Kenneth did not like. The moment she saw Connie and heard her sympathetic "Poor little Kitty," she threw herself into her arms with a storm of sobs and tears, which cooled her blood and softened the hard lines about her mouth. A little later and the two stood together by the dead, Kitty lamenting that Connie could not have seen him in his manly beauty, and not as he was now, thin and worn, but with a look of peace on his face. Connie's conscience pricked her a good deal for the deception she was practicing, and but for Kenneth she might have told Kitty a part of the story.

"Better not," he said. "The secret in all its details is known only to you and me; let us keep it sacred. You could never tell all, and even a part would distress her."

Connie kept her secret and soothed and comforted

the stricken Kitty, and cared for the baby, which came to her as readily as to its mother or Cindy.

"And you will stay with me, if I stay here?" Kitty said to her, when they returned from burying Hal beside his mother in the old yard behind the church. "I don't know what I am to do. Tom is in California, and father has lost everything and is boarding in Lexington, and this house is so big for baby and me."

She clung like a child to Connie, who replied: "I'll stay until matters are adjusted."

"What matters?" Kitty asked, wholly unsuspicious of the mortgages and notes which would soon come up before her, making her cry out in anguish: "Oh, Harry, I never dreamed of this. I wish I had died before I knew it."

CHAPTER XVIII

WINDING UP

So far as Hal's debts were concerned, it was a rapid progress. He died in August, and promptly on the first day of September Jones appeared at the farmhouse, with his note for three thousand dollars. He had heard rumors of Harry's insolvency, but it didn't concern him. The deacon was on his paper, and that girl, who, he heard, had a big gold mine in the West, paying hundreds a day. She was bound as well as the deacon, and he wondered why the latter should have grown so old and worried-looking. "To be sure, paying the money might mean his farm and house, but the girl won't allow that. They say she's to marry Dr. Ken," he thought, as he rode up to the farmhouse. Connie stayed mostly with Kitty, but this morning she was at the barn watching the cats eating their milk in the long trough, and talking to the deacon, who tried to seem natural, although his heart was very sad. He knew that Harry had scarcely left enough to pay his funeral expenses, and the note lay heavily upon his mind. He knew Jones, and expected him that day, but not quite so early, and he groaned aloud as he saw him hitching his old white horse at the gate and then come smilingly up the walk, while he and Connie went to meet him.

"Good-mornin', deacon. Good-mornin', miss. I am in luck to find you both together," he said. "There's that little matter of three thousand, with interest, lent to young Morris, with you two as sureties, and it is due to-day. I hear he wasn't worth a red, and lived like a prince, with three or four niggers and a coachman, who wore a high hat and brass buttons, and the widder keeps up the same style, though the Lord knows how she is goin' to pay for it all, with them other debts. She or'to be economical, but what can you expect from a Southern woman, who has never let one hand wash the other, and is too big for common folks."

"If you mean Mrs. Harold Morris," Connie said, stepping up to him, "I'd like you to speak more respectfully of her. As long as the creditors get their money, it's none of their business what she does. They will be paid. You will be paid;—not this minute, of course. I don't keep three thousand dollars lying loose in my pocket, but it is in the bank, and you are not to trouble Deacon Stannard. It is my matter."

She motioned him off with an imperative gesture, which made him feel almost as if she had struck him.

"Beg pardon," he said, walking away from her. "I allus thought you'd have to pay it. Let me know when you hear from the bank."

He unhitched Whitey and drove away, while the deacon sat down upon the horse-block, white and trembling.

"Connie," he stammered, "it don't seem right

that you should pay, but you don't know how it has troubled me since I knew the boy had nothing. It has kep' me awake nights, for Mary and me is too old to find another place."

"Nor will you have to," Connie answered. "The mine is paying well, and what is money good for except to help you, who have been so good to me? I've more than the mine. I am really quite a rich woman, thanks to you, who cared so well for my interests, restraining auntie when she would have spent everything. I know all about it,—what leeches we were,—and wonder I had anything left. I am reaping the benefit of the mine investment."

The deacon could scarcely speak, except to call her "an angel of mercy." And she was one, not only to him, but to Kitty, who was nearly frantic when she learned the state of affairs, and bills of every kind came in from Millville and Albany, Rocky Point and Boston and New York,—gambling debts with the rest, and some of a more questionable kind, which Kenneth promptly burned.

"Let them sue," he said; "they can get nothing."

"But the house and furniture,—how much is it all worth?" Connie asked. "You know I am a simpleton, and wholly ignorant of what is to be done. How much will free the house and give Kitty and baby a home?"

Kenneth told her about how much, but added: "Kitty will have to live; the house will not support her."

Connie had not thought of that, and looked trou-

bled until Kenneth, who had been thinking seriously on the matter for some days, said to her: "How would you like to live in the villa,—with me, I mean? We are to be married soon, and it would be better to have a home of our own than to stay with father and mother. Kitty and the baby can live with us."

Connie hesitated a moment. She had never quite forgiven Harry for his deception, and could not at once make up her mind to live in a house which had been his. Still, she could be happy anywhere with Kenneth, and it would be a home for Kitty. It was a beautiful place, with every modern improvement possible in the country. Harry was dead. He had tried to make amends, he was sorry for what he had done, he had named his baby for her, and— Yes, she would live there, she said at last, and Kitty should be their care until something better presented itself for her. This decision was received by Kitty with a burst of glad tears and regrets for the past, when thousands had been spent so recklessly, with a belief that there were thousands more to take their place, and now she was poorer than the poorest factory girl in Millville. She could not go to the obscure boarding-house where her father lived, and Tom had no place for her. She must stay where she was, with Kenneth and Connie, who were to be married soon in New York, for the countess would have it so.

She was not pleased when she first heard of Connie's engagement to Kenneth. "She ought to do better than marry a common country doctor," she said. But when she saw him, her opinion underwent

a rapid change. He was a country doctor still, but not a common man, either in physique or manners, and she felt that Connie had chosen well. Of the man who called himself Harold Meurice she never spoke to Connie. He had passed out of her knowledge, and his secret was buried in the churchyard at The 4 Corners. The count, grown wiser, and perhaps fonder of his wife, with two years of matrimony, continued to treat Connie in a most fatherly manner, so that her few weeks' stay with her aunt was very pleasant, enlivened as they were by daily letters from Kenneth and two or three a week from Kitty, who was longing for her to return.

The wedding, which took place in October, was a very quiet affair, with only a few friends of the countess present, and Dr. Catherin, who happened to be in the city. Kenneth was too popular a physician, and there were too many hands stretching out to him for help, to allow of an extended trip; and the last of the month, when the hills and mountains were putting on their autumnal dress, and the country was almost as beautiful as the early summer time, he brought his bride to what was henceforth to be known as the Stannard Place, instead of the Morris Villa. Kitty was there to receive them, very lovely and sweet in her widow's weeds, and yielding her place as mistress of the house willingly and gracefully. She knew she was a dependant, for after matters were settled there was nothing left to her but the memory of her short married life and the baby Connie, who was the pet of the household and in a fair way to be

spoiled until a year later, when a little boy came to divide the honors with her.

Kitty fancied there was a look in his face like her dead husband, and said so to Connie, adding: "Would you mind calling him Harold? It is such a pretty name!"

She could not guess how Connie recoiled from the thought of calling her baby for the man who had caused her so much pain, or that she would sooner give him the old-fashioned name of Ephraim, for the grandfather who came two or three times a day to see him, and with his wife was growing young in the happinees crowning his declining years.

"Yes, Harold is a pretty name," she said, "but baby is to be Kenneth Elliott."

It is more than a year since the baby came, and he is now a sturdy boy, disputing his rights with his cousin Connie, a little, delicate, timid girl, who always gives up to him unless his mother interferes to prevent what might become tyranny but for her judicious treatment. Should you be at The 4 Corners some wintry day when the sleighing is good and the sun is shining warm and bright, you may perhaps see the sled on which the first Connie once rode in the mud, and on which little Connie now frequently rides in the snow, with Dr. Kenneth in front. He has built sides and back to it, and sometimes, when the day is very fine, baby Ken sits on the sled, holding in his little hands the lines his grandmother knit, and to which he occasionally gives a pull, with the only words he can fully master, "Do on," to his wil-

ling horse. Sometimes Connie is with them, and always a dog, whom they call Chance, and who is much like the other Chance, whose grave is on the ledge where Kenneth had his Christmas tree and Connie gave herself to him.

They are very happy, Kenneth and Connie, and no shadow, however slight, has ever arisen to dim their married life. Kenneth is constantly gaining in his profession, and many offers have been made him for a more lucrative position in larger cities, but he prefers to stay where he is. His father and mother are there, and it was there Connie came to him, stirring, as he believes, all the good impulses which have made him what he is. He likes the country, and says he shall spend his life there. And now there is nothing more to tell of the story commenced on the summer morning, when Jehu and Henriet took us up the long hill and we sat on the church steps at what was once and is still, in a way, the famous 4 Corners.

THE END.